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PRINCESS MAKING
Neil Gaiman *interview*

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Masamune Shirow *interview*

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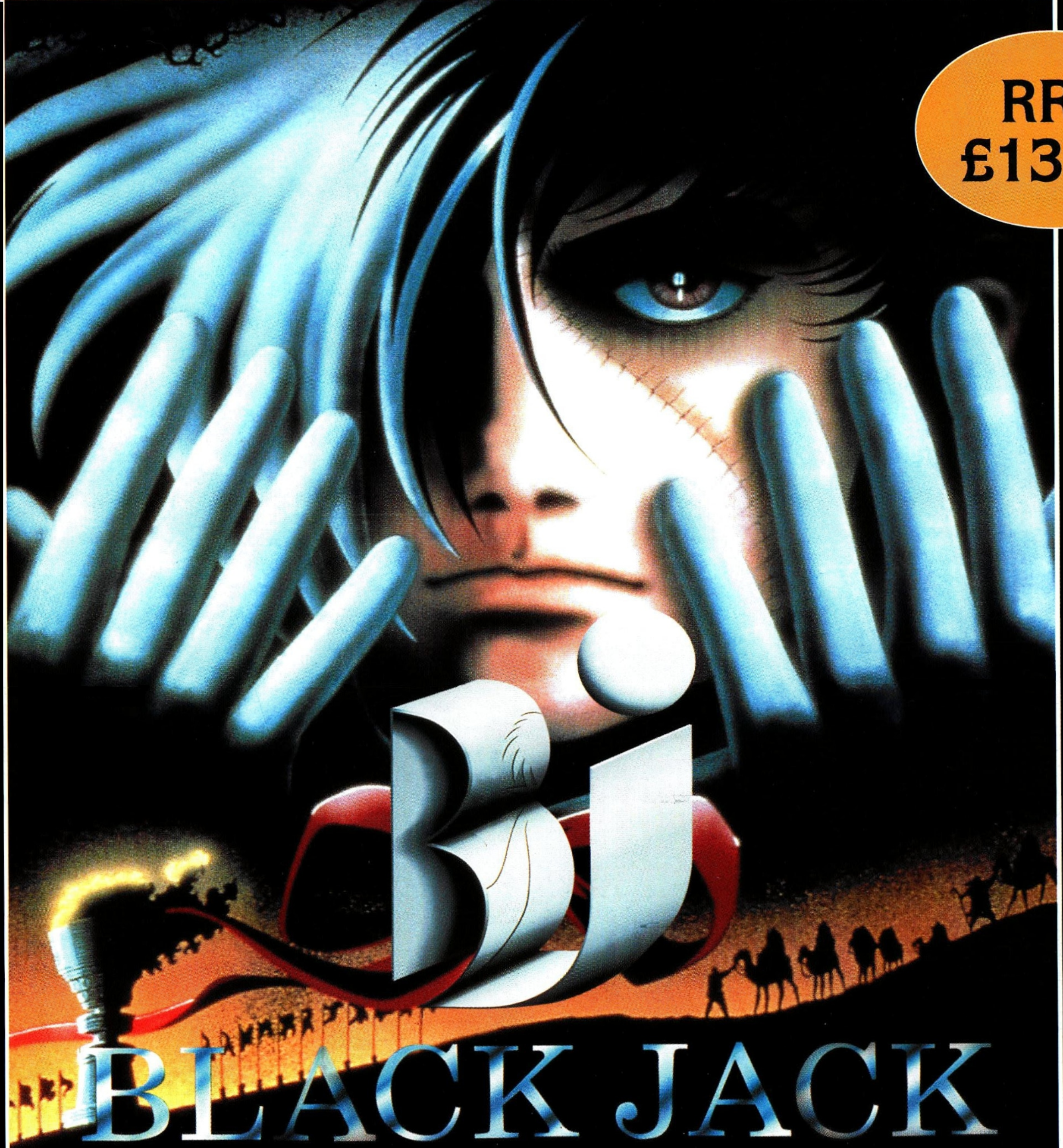

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MANGA VIDEO

Contents

Welcome to issue one of *Manga Max*, if you're reading this in the USA. Welcome to issue 47 of the Magazine Formerly Known as *Manga Mania*, if you're reading this in the UK.

Two things we've had to do because of the demands of the US marketplace. We've had to change the name for legal reasons, but we've also shaken the magazine up a bit. As I type this, it's still a pile of black and white pages and a designer having a panic attack, but when you read these words it'll be glossy and posh. It also won't have any manga in it. For the near future, *Manga Max* will not be serialising comics. We can't reprint American strips like we used to, because we now have American readers. We could run previously-untranslated strips, but the brass here tell me they'd rather invest in a great magazine than waste their (and your) money trying to outbid Studio Proteus, Viz, Mixx and the other US manga publishers. If you want monthly manga, there's no way we could offer you a better deal than *Pulp* , *Animerica Extra* or *Mixxzine*, so buy them.

You'll also notice that the Hong Kong stuff has been rounded up and herded into its own section, supplied by the boys at *Eastern Heroes*. They've spent the last decade covering the kung fu movie scene, from their early days as a Jackie Chan fanzine to the insomniac heights of pro publishing. They will be supplying our Hong Kong section in future, and we welcome them and the readers they bring over from their magazine.

Oh yes, and readers in some territories will find an extra, sealed section in the centre of the magazine, both to commemorate and shamelessly plug the *Erotic Anime Movie Guide* from Titan Books. Do not break the seal if you are easily offended. Actually, if you are easily offended, you should probably avoid our reviews section as well.

Jonathan Clements

FEATURES

10 **THE REWRITE STUFF**
Neil Gaiman on *Princess Mononoke*.

14 **21st CENTURY BOYS**
Who's really who in the anime business today.

18 **BEING DIGITAL**
Exclusive Masamune Shirow interview and preview of *Intron Depot* 2.

18

26 **HIS SECRET, HER SECRET**
Masami Tsuda's affairs of the heart.

28 **TABLE TALK**
Role-playing Japanese-style!

36 **A POCKETFUL OF MONSTERS**
They fight. You fit.

62 **LEETHAL WEAPON**
Jet Li hits the big time.

66 **ONCE UPON A TIME IN TEXAS**
Roberto Lopez was behind the cameras on *Once Upon a Time in China and America*. Then he was in *front* of them.

REGULARS

4 **NEWS**
What's happening on the anime scence in Japan, the US and Britain.

42 **FAN SCENE**
Convention news and fanzines.

44 **REVIEWS**
We help you spend your money.

52 **LETTERS**
Bile and sophomoric posturing, and that's just the *Manga Max* staff.

54 **LAST WORD**
Industry commentary, developments, scandal and opinion.

55 **NEXT ISSUE**
At the last minute, we'll make a load of stuff up and *pray* it'll be delivered on time.

58 **RICK'S ROUND-UP**
Eastern Heroes' Rick Baker on the latest Hong Kong gossip.

66

1998

MANGA MAX

V01 N01

DECEMBER

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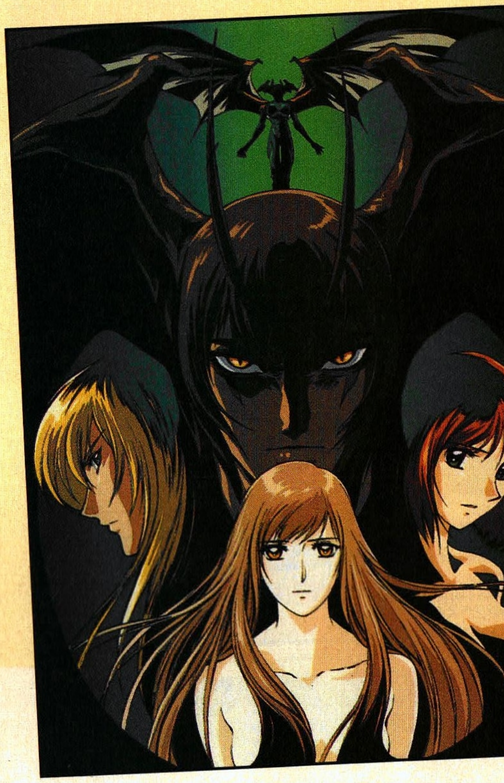
She's *no* Angel



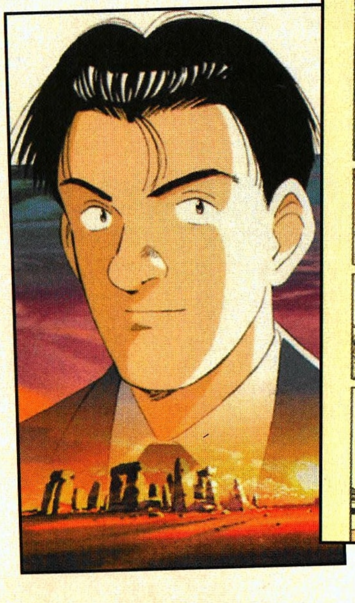
Jun is a beautiful model with an ugly secret: she's a little devil. It was only a matter of time before Go Nagai's latest manga creation made it to the small screen, and *Devilman Lady* is now airing on Japanese television in the dead of night. Although members of Nagai's original *Devilman* cast do make appearances, this is very much a different direction from the 1972 television series. For the anti-heroine heself, Nagai has cast one of anime's flavours of the moment, Junko Iwao. Those of you who have heard her screaming her adenoids off in *Perfect Blue* will know she's ideally suited for the job. Original creator Go Nagai produces, while *Vampire Princess Miyu*'s Toshihiro Hirano directs. And the script is by the overworked Chiaki Konaka, who is already penning *Lain* and *Bubblegum Crisis 2040*. Poor lamb, all work and no play. ●

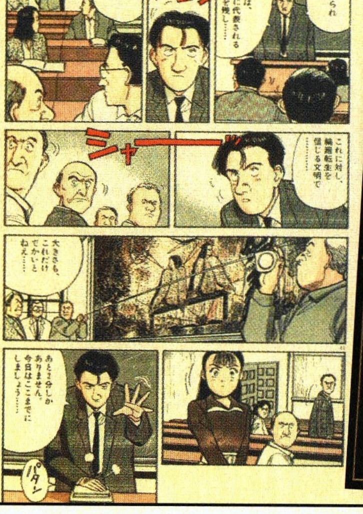
The J-TEAM

He's back, and this time he's brought his Dad. Half British, half Japanese, all trouble, Taichi Keaton is a former SAS officer, impoverished archaeology lecturer and freelance investigator for Lloyd's.

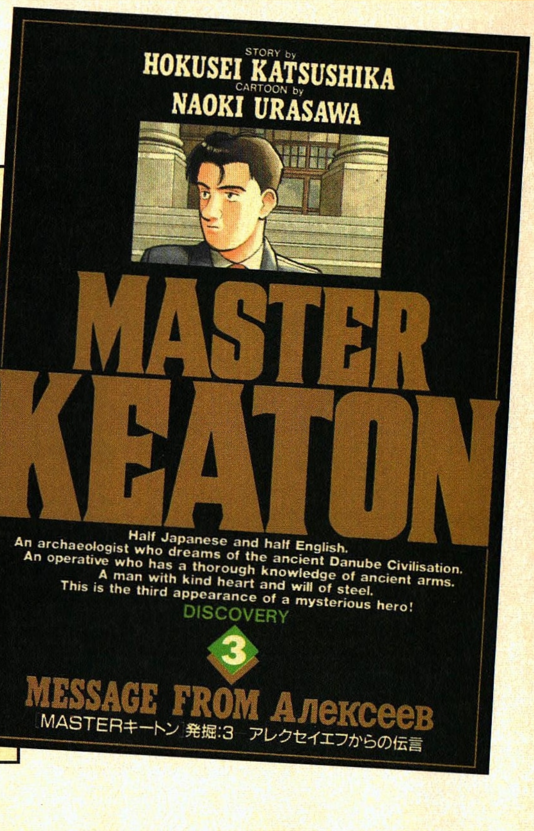
The long-running manga *Master Keaton* was written by Hokusei Katsuchika and drawn by *Pineapple Army*'s Naoki Urasawa; now all 18 volumes are set for the television anime treatment, in late-night broadcasts courtesy of the Madhouse animation team. Overseen by Tatsuhiko Urahata but directed by Masayuki Kojima, the *Master Keaton* anime also features two other members of the Keaton family, his daughter Yuriko (an Oxford wannabe) and his crusty old Dad Hiraga.

If someone's up to their neck in fraud, you can guarantee that Keaton's the one to sniff it out, in a bizarre mixture of *film noir*, Indiana Jones and the wacky world of insurance claims. So far our jet-setting insurance man has already fought terrorism in Dusseldorf, tracked a runaway in Milan, hid away from the Russian Mafia and investigated stone monuments in the Scilly Isles. We'll be investigating *him* next issue. ●





……こうは考えられませんか？
永遠の命を信ずる人々は、ピラミッドに代表される「石の文明」を残し……
コツ コツ
……
これ、転写は無理ですねえ。
コツ コツ
これに対し、輪廻転生を信じる文明で……
シャーッ
大きさも、これだけでかいとねえ……
あと少ししかありません。今日はここまでにしましょう……
パタン



STORY by
HOKUSEI KATSUSHIKA
CARTOON by
NAOKI URASAWA

MASTER KEATON

Half Japanese and half English.
An archaeologist who dreams of the ancient Danube Civilisation.
An operative who has a thorough knowledge of ancient arms.
A man with kind heart and will of steel.
This is the third appearance of a mysterious hero!

DISCOVERY
3
MESSAGE FROM Алексеев
MASTERキートン 発掘:3 アレクセイエフからの伝言

TIME RAIDER

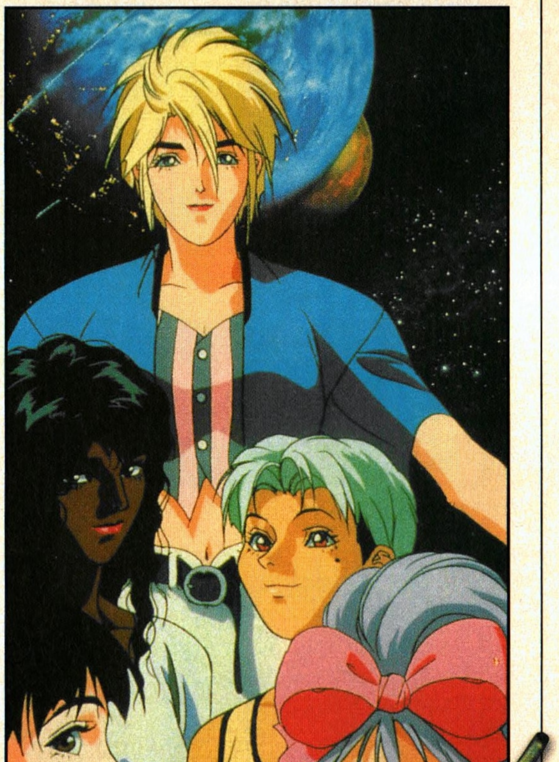
Her name is Lila, Lila Mochizuki, and she's a long way from home. In the year 2099, one of NASA's Apollo rockets is found in the Mongolian desert. But the capsule appears to have been there for 65 million years. Meanwhile, there's another strange discovery on Mars: a giant black artifact of unknown origin. Before anyone can say "My God! It's full of stars!", the thing starts eating one of the red planet's moons. When the Earth ship *Davide* is sent to investigate, it is sucked into the vortex. And that's where the fun really starts. Already broadcast on the satellite channel WOWOW, *Visitor* has its video release this month in Japan. The script is by Japan's finest, *Patlabor*'s Kazunori Ito, and even the computer-generated format can't hide the distinctive style of *Patlabor* character designer Akemi Takada. Billed as Japan's first fully three-dimensional computer animation, its look has already been described by *Newtype* magazine as faintly reminiscent of Supermarionation. Just think, they could have saved all that cash if they'd just hired Gerry Anderson and a couple of puppets. ●

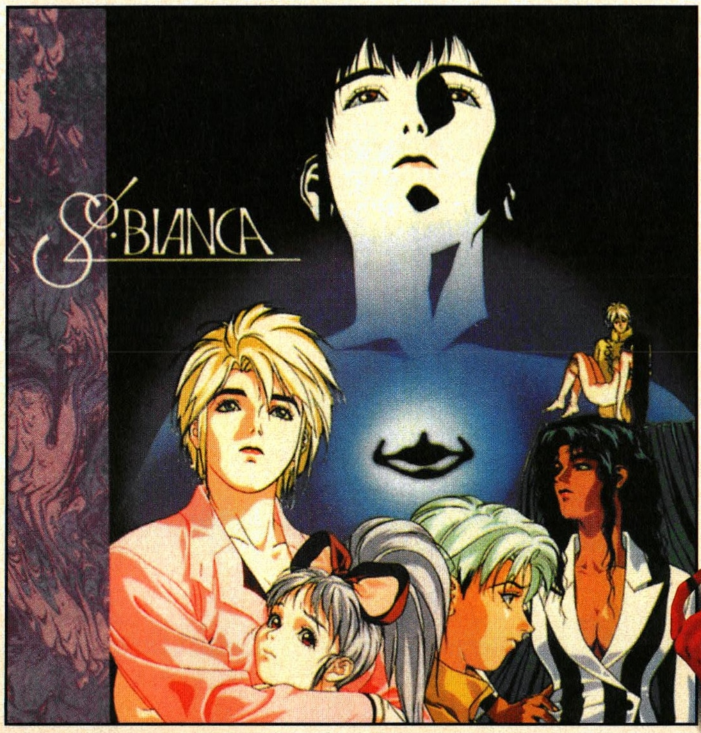
Sources this issue

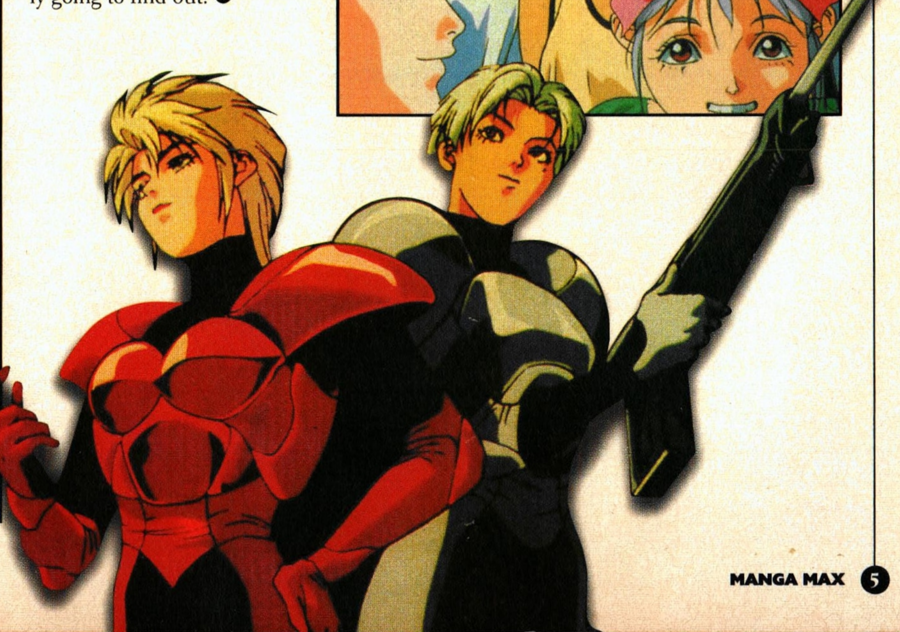
Animage (we love Maki Watanabe), *AX*, *Looker* (The Artist Formerly Known As *Anime V*), Helen McCarthy, *Newtype*, Fred Patten, *Previews*, Julia Sertori.

Number *One SUN*

Way back in 1995 the UK anime scene witnessed a translator's hissy fit, when a subtitling company changed the line "Stop it, May. Don't you have work to do?" to "Stop it May. Don't you have homework to do?" The video was *Sol Bianca*, the tale of interstellar piracy in the Space Year 652, featuring an all-female crew who shouldn't have time for homework. But in the new *Sol Bianca* video, forthcoming from Pioneer in Japan, it's perfectly reasonable for a space pirate to study. May is now called Meiyo, is a mere 10 years old, and does indeed go to school, attending a virtual classroom. The main crew are the same, but in changes to the original, their ages and roles have been shunted around. Tall, graceful Feb is no longer the leader. She's still the oldest at a venerable 28, but now the gutsy, 22-year old April is in charge. The butch Janny is now a youthful 18, but still obsessed with guns and body-building. But fans will finally have the chance to answer some of those questions that have been plaguing them for years. How did the *Sol Bianca* get its name? From April. How did the crew meet June, the pilot? They found her onboard in cold sleep. And who the hell are Yuri Shurabana and the sleeping beauty Noaal, last seen at the end of episode two? Eight long years after the last cliff-hanger ending, we're finally going to find out. ●







INCOMING MANGA TITLES: DECEMBER

ANTARCTIC PRESS

Robotech: Final Fire #1
Lee Duhig, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Robotech: Class Reunion #1
Gregory Lane, B&W, 48pg, $3.95/£2.65

CPM MANGA
Record of Lodoss War: The Grey Witch #2
Mizuno & Yamada, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Slayers #3
Kanzaka & Araizumi, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Midnight Panther: Feudal Fantasy #4
Yu Asagiri, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Legend of Lemnear #12
Satoshi Urushihara, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95

CPM MANGA X (These comics may not be available in the UK due to adult content)

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Demon Beast Invasion: The Fallen #4
B&W, $2.95/£1.95

DARK HORSE

Blade of the Immortal #28 (On Silent Wings #8 of 8)
Hiroaki Samura, B&W, 32pg $2.95/£1.95
Godzilla: King of the Monsters #6
Maguire, McKinney & Reed, Colour, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Godzilla: Terror of Godzilla #5
Kazuhisa Iwata, Colour, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Caravan Kidd Graphic Novel Volume 3
Johji Manabe, B&W, 296pg, $19.95/£16.95
Drakuun #21 (The Hidden War #3)
Johji Manabe, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Oh My Goddess: The Devil in Miss Urd #2
Kosuke Fujishima, B&W, 32 pg, $2.95/£1.95
Shadow Lady: Dangerous Love #3
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EROS MANGAROTICA (These titles may not be available in the U.K due to adult content)

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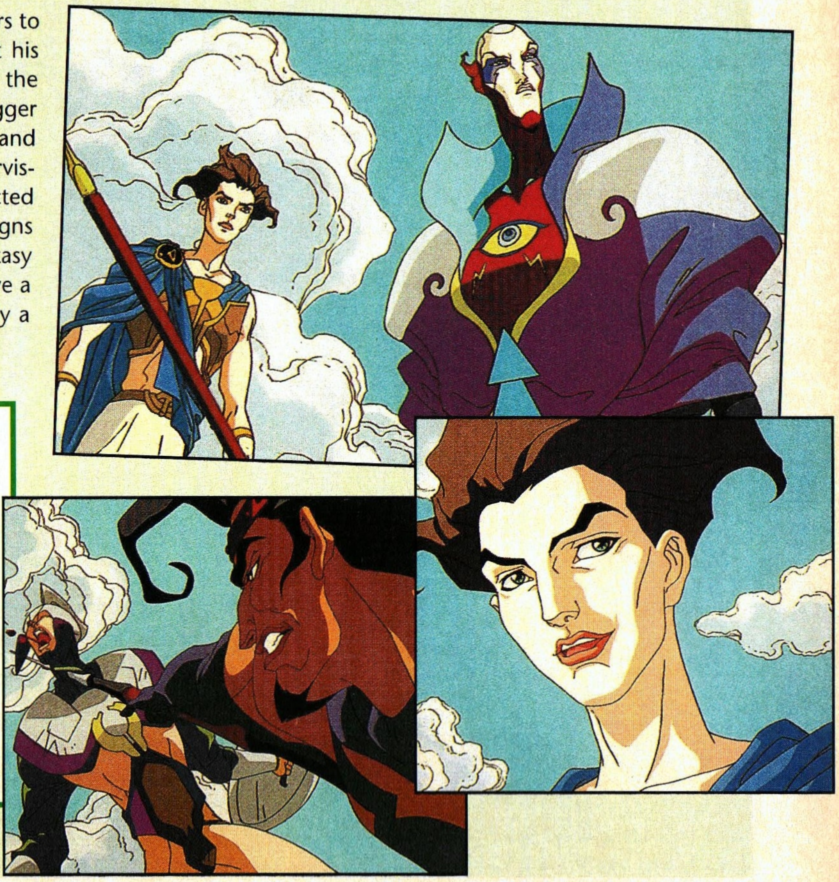
Kondom, B&W, 24pg, $2.95/£1.95
Secret Plot Deep #7
NeWMeN, B&W, 32pg, $3.50/£2.30
Silky Whip #9
Oh! Great, B&W, 32pg, $3.50/L2.30
The Voice of Submission #7
Mashumaro Juubaori, B&W, 24pg, $2.95/£1.95

IMAGE COMICS

Darkminds #6
Lee, Lee & Tam, Colour, 32pg, $2.50/£1.65
Heavily anime influenced and surprisingly good noir cyber thriller. Gen13: Magical Drama Queen Roxy #3

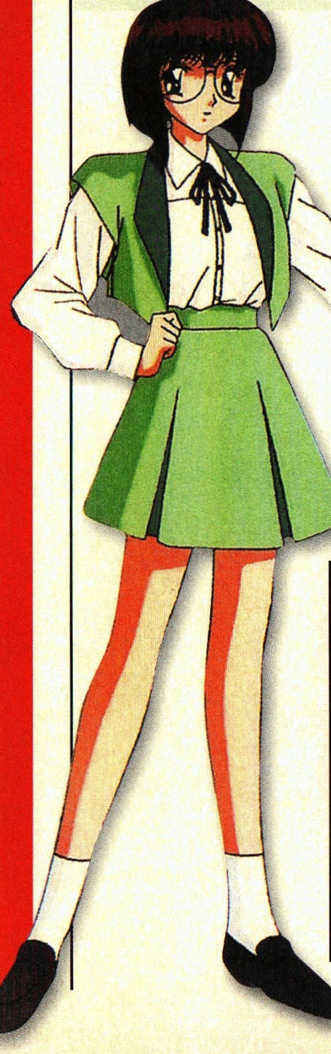
FLETCH *Too*

"Jack Fletcher puts lesser dubbing directors to shame" said MM28 back in 1995 about his excellent work on *Tenchi Muyo*, and now the voice mastercraftsman has gone onto bigger and better things. After helming *Spawn* and *Princess Mononoke*, Fletcher is now supervising the English version of *Alexander*. Directed by Taro Rin and featuring character designs from Peter *(Aeon Flux)* Chung, this fantasy retelling of historical fact has yet to receive a greenlight for release abroad, but it's only a matter of time. ●



CASTING CALL

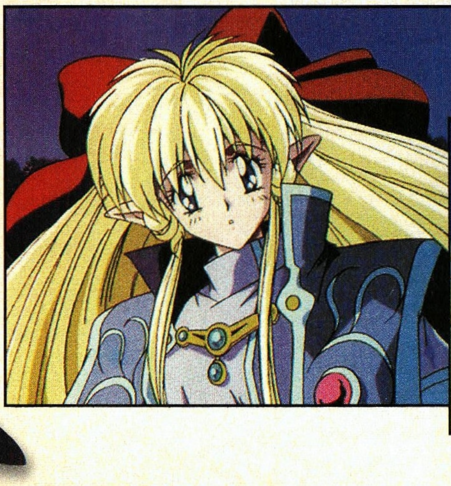
Alexander III	Andy Philpot
Olympias	Julia Demita
Philip II	John Dimaggio
Aristotle	John Lee
Ptolemy	Matt McKenzie
Philotas	Alex Fernandez
Cleitas	John Demita
Hephaestion	John Demita
Attalus	Dwight Schultz

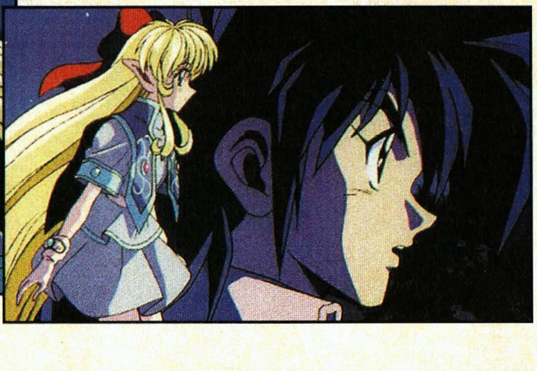


APRIL Reine

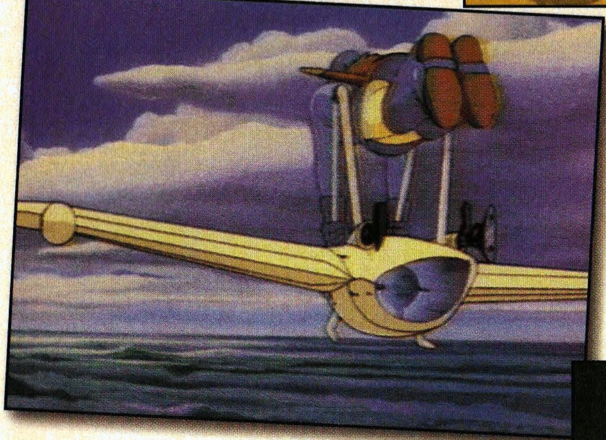
Looking ahead to spring in the USA, you can kiss goodbye to *Fairy Princess Reine*; from now on the official title is *Elf Princess Rane*, as Urban Visions announce their acquisition of the mad KSS fairy comedy. Rane is a fairy princess from the parallel universe of Panyora, come to our world in search of four magical gems. When she bumps into the bookish fanboy Go Takarada, she inspires his dreams of becoming a treasure hunter. Pity the poor girl who has to fill the shoes of voice actress Miki Takahashi; some of the wacky dialogue is thrown around so fast it'll require a superhuman effort. Even if it's released in a subbed version, you'll need a fast pair of eyes to follow all the arguments.

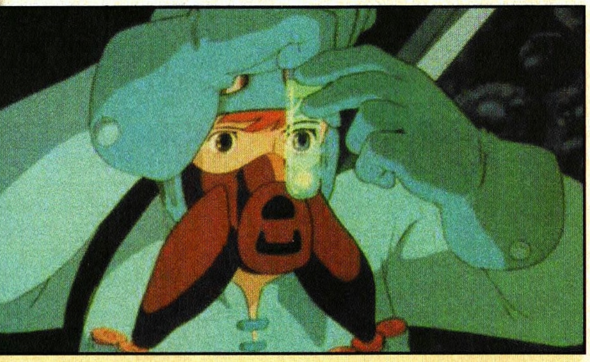
In a mirror of the marketing gimmick that surrounded its Japanese release, *Sakura Wars* should be out in the USA in time for the cherry blossom season. Chisa Yokoyama is the titular Cherry Blossom, leading a rag-tag band of Japanese, French, Russian and Chinese girls in an alternate early 20th century with steampunk robots. US distributors AD Vision are planning both subbed and dubbed editions, but have yet to slate a release date in the UK. ●





Russians FRAG NAUSICAA





Just when you thought the anime world couldn't get any more surreal, Michael Johnson, the owner of the online Miyazaki library nausicaa.net, announces that Russian hackers have invaded and erased the Nausicaa archives. It couldn't have come at a worse time, just as Miyazaki's films start to get the English-language attention they deserve. It's not just the many committed anime fans who are temporarily left without resources on the works of Hayao Miyazaki. Hundreds of journalists all over the world will now be forced to do their own research, until Johnson and his cohorts have rebuilt the site, complete with interviews, article translations, images and transcripts.

Says Johnson: "If you have visited any of our web pages or downloaded and files from this site, please check your hard disk for copies of those web pages or files, we can use them to rebuild the web server and FTP server." Anyone with digital donations can liaise with Michael through **michj@nausicaa.net**. *Manga Max* doubts that nausicaa.net will be offline for long; we can think of several authorities who might be able to rebuild the site single-handed by just cutting, pasting and pressing Send. In the meantime, good luck, Michael and co. Suggested retaliations include forcing Russian television to screen *Vampire Wars* non-stop. ●

In Brief.

Announced in Japan as we went to press, *Harlock Saga: Ring of the Nibelung*. Featuring direction by *Jungle Emperor*'s Toshio Takeuchi, this new video is out in January from Bandai. As to why creator Leiji Matusmoto has suddenly developed an interest in Wagner's opera, could he be trying to draw parallels between the piratic Harlock and another one-eyed divinity called Wotan? Music is by Kaoru Wada, composer of innumerable anime scores from *3x3 Eyes* to *Silent Möbius*, this time conducting the Moscow Symphony Orchestra.

Meanwhile, in California, the UCLA Film and Television Archive has announced a film season on anime, commencing in January 1999. The initial press release claims: "The series will consist of approximately 50 features and 20-40 shorts which will take place over four months, featuring some of the most inventive animators working in Japanese animation today." Interested parties are advised to check the organisation's web pages on www.cinema.ucla.edu for further details. ●

Adam Warren, 40pg, Colour,
$3.50/£2.30

IRONCAT

Dragon Wars #9
Ryukihei, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
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Shinpei Itoh, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
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Narumi Kakinouchi, B&W, 32pg,
$2.95/£1.95
Virtual Bang #5
Ippongi Bang, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Final issue.
Femme Kabuki #2
B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95 ADULT
Ogenki Clinic #4
B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95 ADULT

MARVEL

Spiderman Manga #26/27
Ryoichi Ikegami, B&W, 24pg,
$2.99/£2.00
X-Men Manga #21/22
Yukikaze Amagi, B&W, 24pg,
$2.99/£2.00

MIXX ENTERTAINMENT

Sailor Moon Comic #3
Naoko Takeuchi, B&W, 48pg,
$2.95/£1.95
Mixxzine #4
Various, 120pg, $4.99/L3.40

RADIO COMIX

Mechanical Man Blues #1
Tsukasa Kotobuki, B&W, 32pg,
$2.95/£1.95
New manga from the character designer of Battle Arena Toshinden. A dark future of machine rule is resisted by lady Sonia and a scruffy band of freedom fighters.

VEROTIK

Satanika Animation Drawing Book
Various, Colour, $12.95/£9.95

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

Neon Genesis Evangelion Book 2 GN
Yoshiyuki Sadamoto, B&W, 168pg,
$15.95/£12.95
Also available in an unflipped collector's format.
Pokemon: The Electric Tale of Pikachu #2
Toshihiro Ono, B&W, 40pg,
$3.25/£2.15
Nightwarriors: Darkstalker's Revenge #2
Run Ishida, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
No Need for Tenchi! Part 6 #2
Hitoshi Okuda, B&W, 32pg,
$2.95/L1.95
Animerica Extra Volume 2 #1
Various, B&W, 128pg, $4.95/£3.30
Pulp Volume 3 #1
Various, B&W, 144pg, $5.95/L3.95
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Akira Toriyama, B&W, 32pg,
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Also available in a special 'unflipped' collector's version
Inu Yasha: A Feudal Fairy Tale #6
Rumiko Takahashi, B&W, 40pg, $3.25/£2.15
Ranma Half #11
Rumiko Takahashi, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Maison Ikkoku #5
Rumiko Takahashi, B&W, 48pg, $3.50/£2.30
Things are looking bad for Godai after Kyoko stays out all night with his rival in love, Coach Mitaka.
Inu Yasha Volume 3 Graphic Novel
Rumiko Takahashi, B&W, 176pg, $15.95/£12.95
No Need For Tenchi: Samurai Space Opera Graphic Novel
Hitoshi Okuda, B&W, 176pg, $15.95/£12.95

INCOMING MANGA/ANIME MAGAZINES: DECEMBER

Animefantastique #1
From the producers of Cinefantastique comes this new magazine devoted to world animation and anime. Cover feature for this issue is Irresponsible Captain Tylor.
Magazine, $5.95/£4.50
Animerica #12
Anime news and magazine, 88pg, $4.95/£3.50
Cover feature for this issue is Revolutionary Girl Utena, manga is Galaxy Express 999.

INCOMING UK VIDEO RELEASES: DECEMBER

AD VISION

Evangelion Vol 12 £12.99
The final battle for the fate of the world begins here, as secrets are revealed and the stakes get higher.

INCOMING US VIDEO RELEASES: DECEMBER

AD VISION

Dirty Pair Flash: Mission 3 Act 2
$29.95 Sub, $19.98 Dub
The destructive (surprise!) conclusion to the latest mission for the Lovely Angels

ANIME VILLAGE

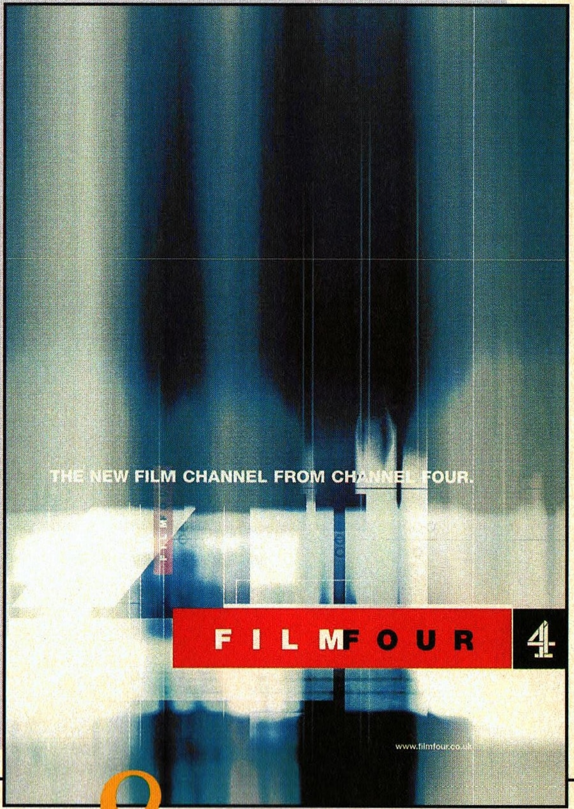
Gundam Movie 1 $29.99 Dub
Saber Marionette J Volume 6
$29.99 Sub
Saber Marionette J Volume 7
$29.99 Sub
Saber Marionette J Volume 8
$29.99 Sub
The Clamp School Volume 6
$29.99 Sub
The Clamp School Volume 7
$29.99 Sub
The Clamp School Volume 8
$29.99 Sub
Vision of Escaflowne Volume 6
$29.99 Sub
Vision of Escaflowne Volume 7
$29.99 Sub
Vision of Escaflowne Volume 8
$29.99 Sub

CENTRAL PARK MEDIA

Tentacle SPOTTING

Filmfour, the UK's newest digital channel, is showing *Legend of the Overfiend* as part of its first run of movie programming. Part of the alternative remit of Channel Four, the new channel is available to UK viewers for £5.99 a month, just one of many digital subscription-based channels.

Overfiend is already on air, the only anime on the schedule, although Filmfour's consultants are rumoured to be negotiating over several other titles, including *Ranma* and *Evangelion*. Hong Kong films in the first month include *Bullet in the Head* and *City on Fire*, Japanese broadcasts include several films by the late Akira Kurosawa. While many Filmfour titles are simply broadcast versions of films already available on video, the channel also plans to buy rights in titles previously unavailable. *Manga Max* would like to point out that the production cost of a sixty minute anime sub would be paid for by just 200 fans subscribing to the channel for a month. That doesn't include broadcast rights, of course, but the new technology now makes it technically possible to show niche programming (like anime) and make a profit. The choice of Toshio Maeda's controversial erotic anime certainly helps bolster C4 chief executive Michael Jackson's hopes for the channel as "risky, nearer to the knuckle, edgy and provocative." ●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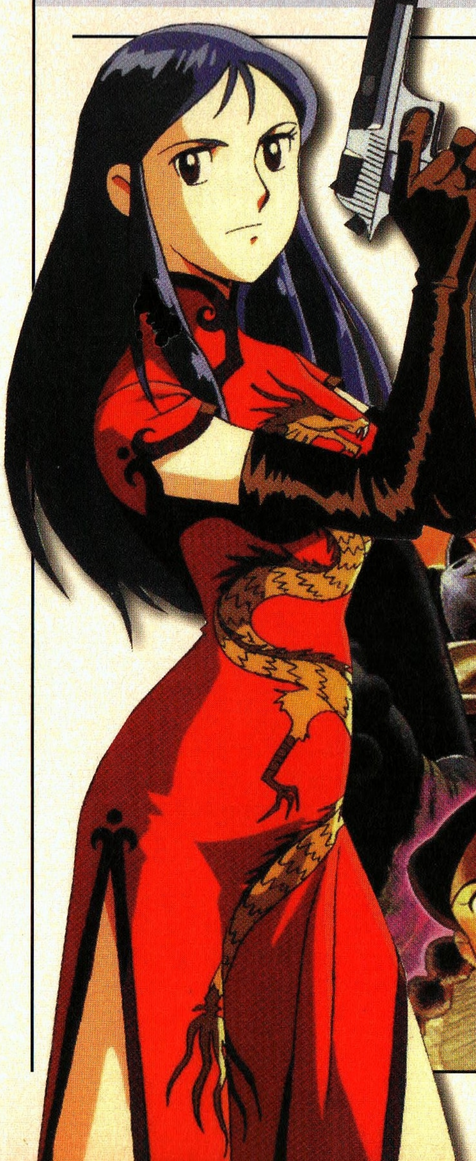
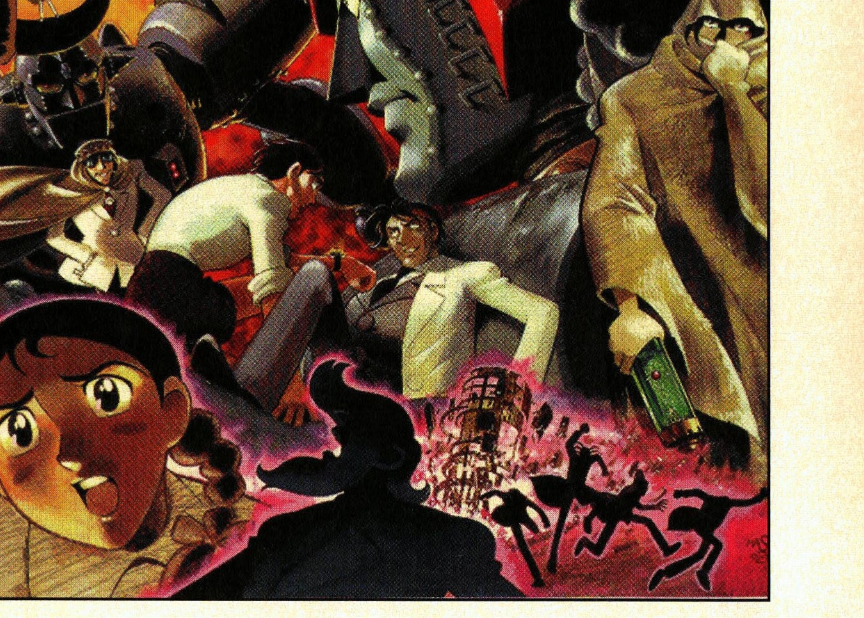


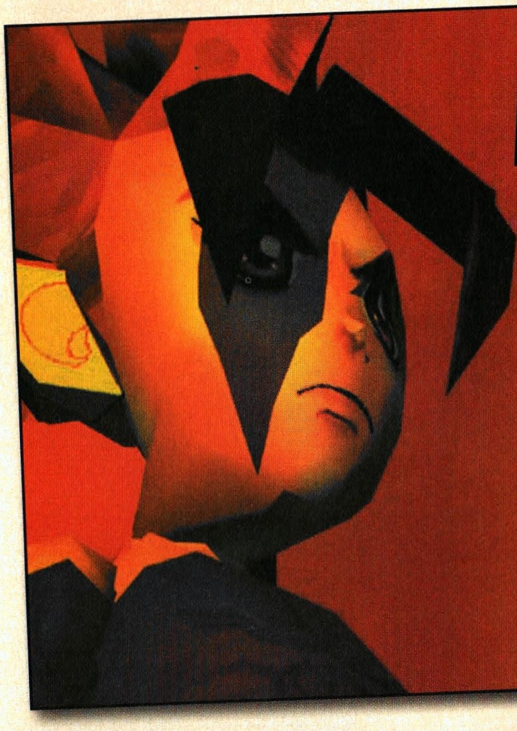
ROBO & GINREI

Extra news for those of you who have been waiting months for the final part of *Giant Robo*. You may be seeing more of Beijing's most famous secret agent than you expected. Manga Entertainment have announced that they plan to release the long-awaited *Giant Robo 7* along with one of the *Ginrei* spin-off videos. Whether this will be included on the tape, or as a separate tape as part of a box set, they have yet to announce. ●

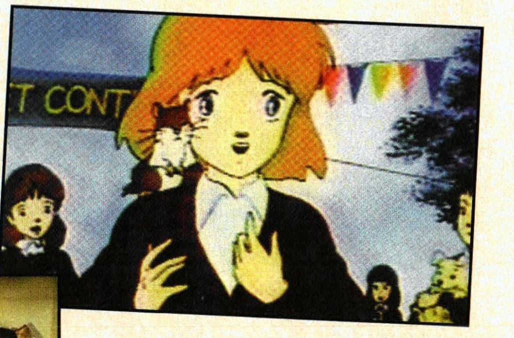


SANE GAMES SEEK FAME

Known to English-speaking viewers as *Red Hawk: Weapon of Death* (as opposed to *Red Hawk: Weapon of Fluffy*) So and Ji's Korean animation is now available as a PC game. Touted without much success round London's ECTS conference by Korean distributor Game DE, the *Red Hawk* game features 3D role-playing and *Final Fantasy*-style asides. It also has a web address (**www.gamus.kr**) but every time we tried to log on, nothing happened. More fun from Game DE includes another anime favourite, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The ancient Chinese novel-turned-manga-turned-anime now has a new incarnation from the aptly-named Sane Sports: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms BASEBALL EDITION*. "Instead of wars and bloody battles from the original story," quoth the press release, "baseball becomes the means of conquest. Famous battle fields are turned into baseball stadiums... If we were clever and peaceful enough to solve regional conflicts peacefully by playing sports like this game, the world should have been different, or would it?" Indeed. ●



Dianime & SMEG



Ginrei actress Sumi Shimamoto is also famous for playing Miyazaki's eponymous *Nausicaa*. But Shimamoto has a very different royal role on her resumé: back in 1986 she starred in *To the End of the Rainbow: The Young Princess Diana Story*. A one-shot feature-length television special written by *Kama Sutra's* Seiji Matsuoka, the show begins with her seventh birthday, and follows her life until her marriage. The dashing Prince Charles, was played by Kenyu Horiuchi, whose most recent job was providing the voice of Lister (Craig Charles) in the Japanese dub of *Red Dwarf*. We'll let you know as soon as we find out the Japanese for "smeg-head". ●

The Ping Pong Club: Love & Comedy (Die! Die! Die!) $29.95 Sub
Mad comedy anime series- contains four complete episodes.
Domain of Murder $29.95 Sub

PIONEER

The New Adventures of Kimba the White Lion Vol 2 $14.98 Dub
The Tezuka classic returns (updated for the 90's?)
Bastard Vol 3: Exodus Sub $24.98, Dub $19.98
The final 2 episodes of this epic magic and mullets series- watch out for the groovy 'metal' in-jokes.

VIZ VIDEO

Maison Ikkoku: My Best Rival's Wedding $29.95 Sub
Ranma Half Out of Control: Happy's Heart $24.95, Dub

INCOMING MANGA TITLES: JANUARY

ANTARCTIC PRESS

Robotech: Final Fire #2
Lee Duhig, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Robotech: Class Reunion #2
Gregory Lane, B&W, 48pg, $3.95/£2.65

CPM MANGA

Record of Lodoss War: The Grey Witch #3
Mizuno & Yamada, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Slayers #4
Kanzaka & Araizumi, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Midnight Panther: Feudal Fantasy #5
Yu Asagiri, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Legend of Lemnear #13
Satoshi Urushihara, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95

CPM MANGA X (These comics may not be available in the U.K due to adult content)

Urotsukidoji: Legend of the Overfiend #7
Toshio Maeda, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Demon Beast Invasion: The Fallen #5
B&W, $2.95/£1.95

DARK HORSE

Blade of the Immortal #29 (Dark Shadows Part 1 of 5)
Hiroaki Samura, B&W, 3pg $2.95/L1.95
Godzilla: Terror of Godzilla #6 (of 6)
Kazuhisa Iwata, Colour, 32pg, $2.95/L1.95
Drakuun #22 (The Hidden War Part 4 of 6)
Johji Manabe, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/L1.95
Oh My Goddess: The Devil in Miss Urd #3
Kosuke Fujishima, B&W, 32 pg, $2.95/L1.95
Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back-Manga #1 Toshiki Kudo, 96pg, B&W, $9.95/L6.95
Gunsmith Cats: Bean Bandit #1 (of 9)
Kenichi Sonada, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/L1.95
Usagi Yojimbo #26 (The Hairpin Murders part 1 of 2)

Stan Sakai, 24pg, B&W, $2.95/L1.95

IMAGE COMICS

Darkminds #7
Lee, Lee & Tam, Colour, 32pg,
$2.50/£1.65

IRONCAT

Dragon Wars #10
Ryukihei, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Futaba-Kun Change! #7
Hiroshi Aro, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
Hyper Dolls #6
Shinpei Itoh, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
New Vampire Miyu #3
Narumi Kakinouchi, B&W, 32pg,
$2.95/£1.95
Femme Kabuki #3
B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95 ADULT
Ogenki Clinic #4
B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95 ADULT

MARVEL

Spiderman Manga #28/29
Ryoichi Ikegami, B&W, 24pg,
$2.99/£2.00
X-Men Manga #22/23
Yukikaze Amagi, B&W, 24pg, $2.99/£2.00

MIXX ENTERTAINMENT

Sailor Moon Comic #4
Naoko Takeuchi, B&W, 48pg,
$2.95/£1.95
Mixxzine #5
Various, 120pg, $4.99/£3.40

RADIO COMIX

Mechanical Man Blues #2
Tsukasa Kotobuki, B&W, 32pg,
$2.95/£1.95

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

Pokemon: The Electric Tale of
Pikachu #3
Toshihiro Ono, B&W, 40pg,
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Nightwarriors: Darkstalker's Revenge #3
Run Ishida, B&W, 32pg, $2.95/£1.95
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Hitoshi Okuda, B&W, 32pg,
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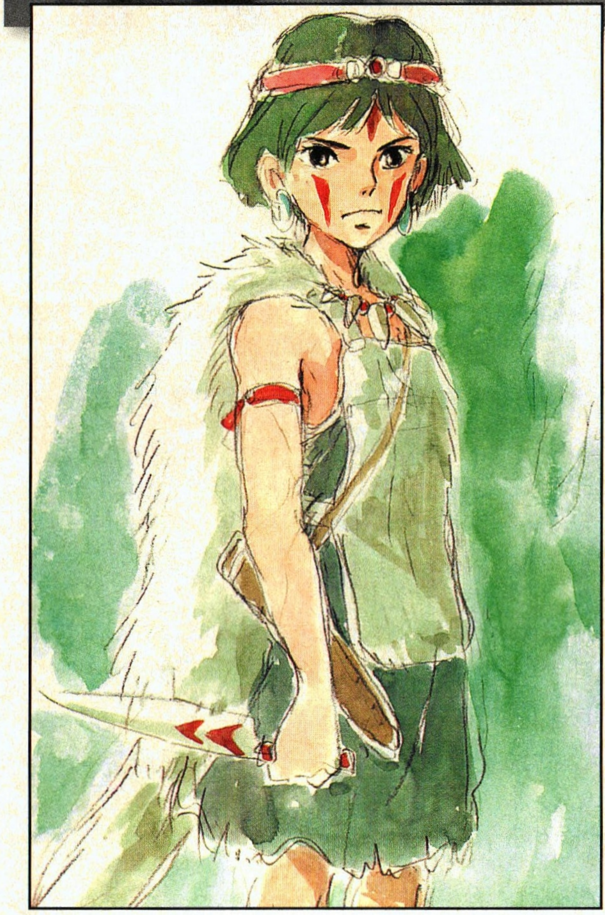
Neil Gaiman
Princess Mononoke
Princess Mononoke

The Rewrite Stuff

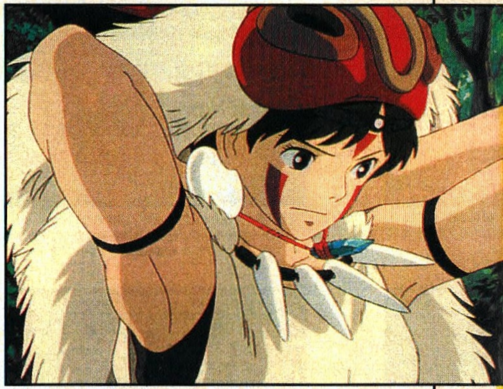


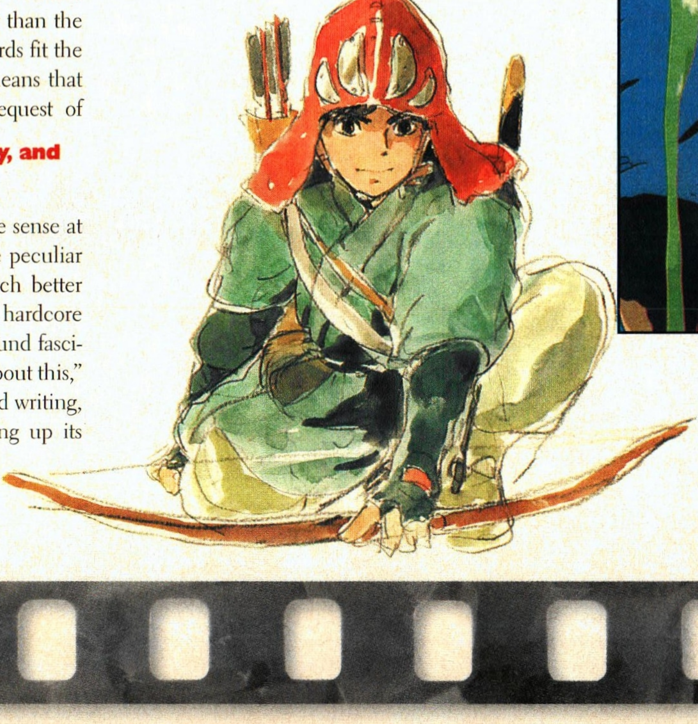
David Hughes talks to Neil Gaiman, who brings his literary talents to *Princess Mononoke*, which he describes as "*Star Wars* in 16th Century Japan"

"It's one of those things that's been really fun to do, but I will probably never do again," cult comics writer Neil Gaiman (*Sandman*) says of his latest project, a rewrite of the English translation for Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*. "It's not that I haven't enjoyed it," he is quick to point out, "but sitting at the bottom of the garden with a video, a telly and a script, watching the same film three hundred times; writing a line, and then having to say it along with the characters to try to see if you can fit it to the mouth movements; and turning obscure Japanese jokes into English... I think it's the kind of thing you only do once."

"This is a serious film, we're doing it properly, and it's going to take time to get right."

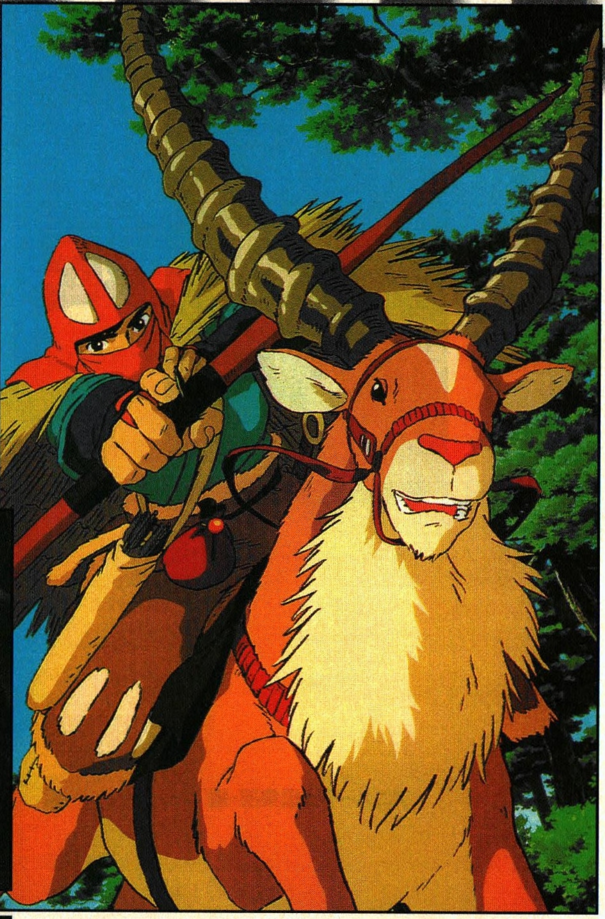
Japanese animators often work the opposite way to Western ones, laying down the vocal tracks to the pictures, rather than the other way around. Thus, Gaiman's insistence that his words fit the characters' mouth movements as precisely as possible means that viewers of the dubbed version (which may, at the request of Miyazaki, be retitled *The Legend of Ashitaka*) will, in one sense at least, be seeing a superior model. "We're actually in the peculiar position [whereby] the mouth movements actually match better than the Japanese one did." Not that Gaiman believes hardcore Hayao Miyazaki fans will see it that way. "The thing I found fascinating is watching the amount of idiocy on the Internet about this," he says. "From pretty much the point where I'd just started writing, you were already getting people accusing me of holding up its release: 'It would be released by now if it wasn't for Gaiman!' I've seen the most amazing conspiracy theories relating to it: 'Disney are delaying it so it won't compete with *Mulan*!'" He sighs. "As far as they were concerned, they wanted us to do it very badly, and then they would have boycotted it anyway. "Nobody's delaying it," he insists. "Everybody's literally running as fast as they can. This is a serious film, we're doing it properly, and it's going to take time to get right." Besides, as Gaiman points out, under the Disney deal, Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli have approval all the way along the line, and have already wielded their influence. "For example," he says, "there is one sequence, right at the beginning, where Ashitaka is fleeing from the monster and shouting at him, and originally I made it much more conversational, in the sense that he was shouting stuff like, 'Please leave us alone! We've done nothing to harm you!' And Studio Ghibli came back saying, 'No, no, no. He knows they've done nothing to hurt this guy, but this is a god, and he has to address it as a god.' So it became sort of 'Oh great master, be still the rage in your breast.'" Prior to this unique undertaking, Gaiman admits to only having "a glancing and lazy interest" in anime. "I've always enjoyed it, but perhaps never quite as much as I felt I should have done," he says. "People would show me things and I'd go, 'Oh, that's nice.'" Seeing *Mononoke*, however, he finally understood what all the fuss was about. "The thing that really changed everything for me on *Mononoke*, I think, was the

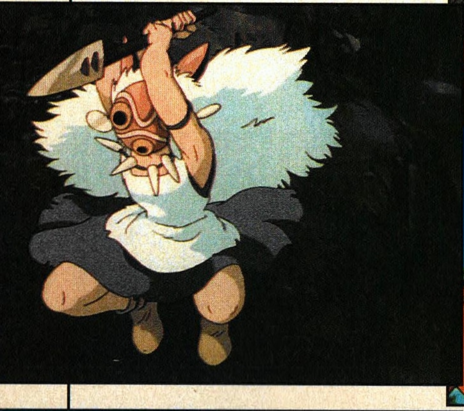


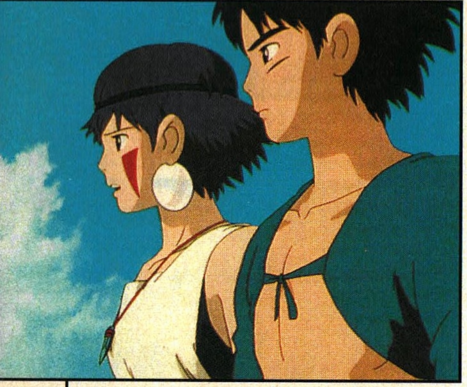


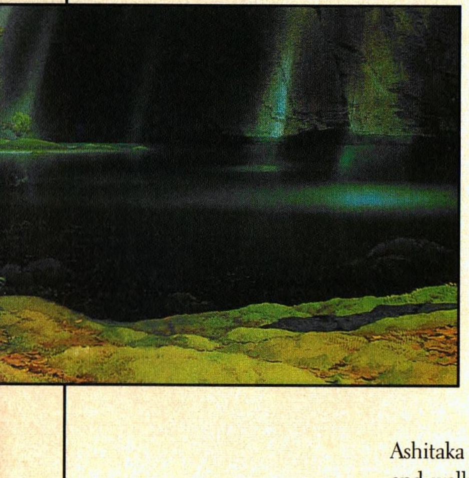
Gaiman photo by & © Kelli Bickman

Mononoke Hime © Miyazaki, Nibariki, Tokuma Shoten



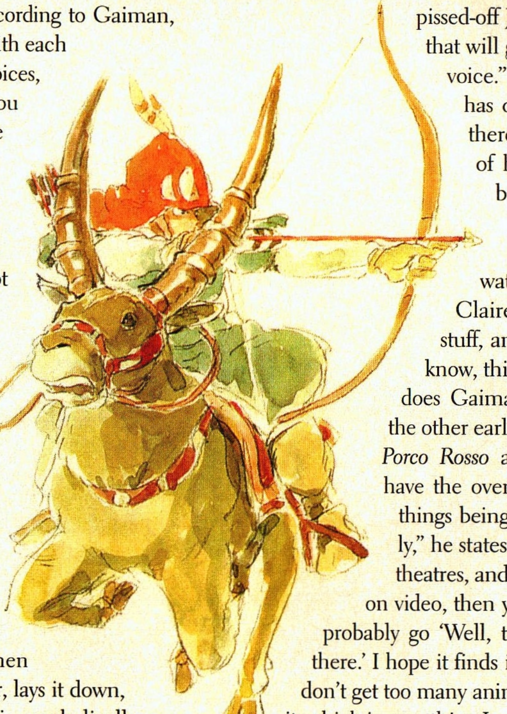






fact that they wouldn't send me a video," he says, referring to Miramax co-chairman Harvey Weinstein's insistence that Gaiman fly to Hollywood to see the film on a big screen. "I went in and saw it there, and just went, 'This is amazing. This is quite wonderful. I've never seen anything like this before.'" According to Gaiman, Weinstein continued this practice with each of the actors he invited to supply voices, "because, if you watch it on video, you don't get it," he explains. "One of the things that is so impressive about it is simply the experience of seeing this gorgeous film, this beautiful piece of artwork, animating across your screen." Armed with a transcript of Studio Ghibli's English subtitles, and a video of the film, Gaiman returned home to begin rewriting. "Harvey wanted something that was... poetic is probably the wrong word, but that had a certain amount of beauty to it. The whole plan was to have things going on that people could actually say," he explains, "and try to sneak in bits of information that the Japanese would have already. For example, when Ashitaka is told he has to leave, he cuts his hair, lays it down, and walks out. Now, the act of cutting his hair, symbolically, means that his old life is now dead. It's what you do when you become a monk or something. So when one of these elderly gentleman bewails this, he just adds more information." Did Gaiman take the opportunity to insert additional dialogue over the 'cutaway' scenes – thus avoiding total reliance on on-camera speech patterns, as the late Phil Hartman did in Miramax's dub of *Kiki's Delivery Service*? "A little, but very little," he says. "There are a couple of scenes where I added little bits of information that people would have otherwise been puzzled by. But my [intention] was to try and be as faithful as possible, to try and recreate the kind of viewing experience that you would have got if you were Japanese seeing it in Japan." So what did he find the most challenging aspect of this endeavour? "The jokes," he says, without hesitation. "You can't translate the joke, because it isn't funny unless you're Japanese. But all these characters are laughing, so you have to give them a joke that more or less does the same thing, and doesn't screw up the sense of the thing. There are still one or two places where I have no idea if it's going to work," he admits. "It will be up to the actors who are going to have to pull this off..." Luckily, Miramax has lined up an extraordinary level of talent for the voice actors – Billy Crudup *(Sleepers)* as Ashitaka, Claire Danes *(Romeo & Juliet)* as San, Gillian Anderson *(The X-Files)* as Moro, Billy Bob Thornton *(Armageddon)* as Jigo and Minnie Driver *(Good Will Hunting)* as Eboshi; none of whom, incidentally, Gaiman had in mind as he wrote. "What I tended to do was just make up casting in my head, and that was kind of funny," he says. "You figure, well, you're probably not going to get that actor, but I'll write this character for a pissed-off John Cleese, or whatever, because that will give each character his or her own voice." At the time of our talk, Gaiman has only seen parts of the dub, and is therefore reluctant to give an opinion of how successful the enterprise has been. Nevertheless, he says, "I was really pleased. I had no idea how this thing was going to work, but I watched a video of the Billy Crudup, Claire Danes and Gillian Anderson stuff, and I'm looking at it thinking, 'You know, this thing's going to work!'" If it does, does Gaiman think Miramax will re-release the other early Miyazaki works, such as *Laputa*, *Porco Rosso* and *Nausicaa*, for which Disney have the overseas rights? "To be honest, these things being driven more or less commercially," he states, "so if *Mononoke* does well in the theatres, and if *Kiki's Delivery Service* does well on video, then yes. If they don't, then Disney will probably go 'Well, there is no real market for it out there.' I hope it finds its audience," he adds. "I hope we don't get too many anime fans decrying it before they see it, which is something I noticed so much of on the web. You know what? I think it's pretty damned good." ●

> **"The whole plan was to have things going on that people could actually say and try to sneak in bits of information that the Japanese would have already."**



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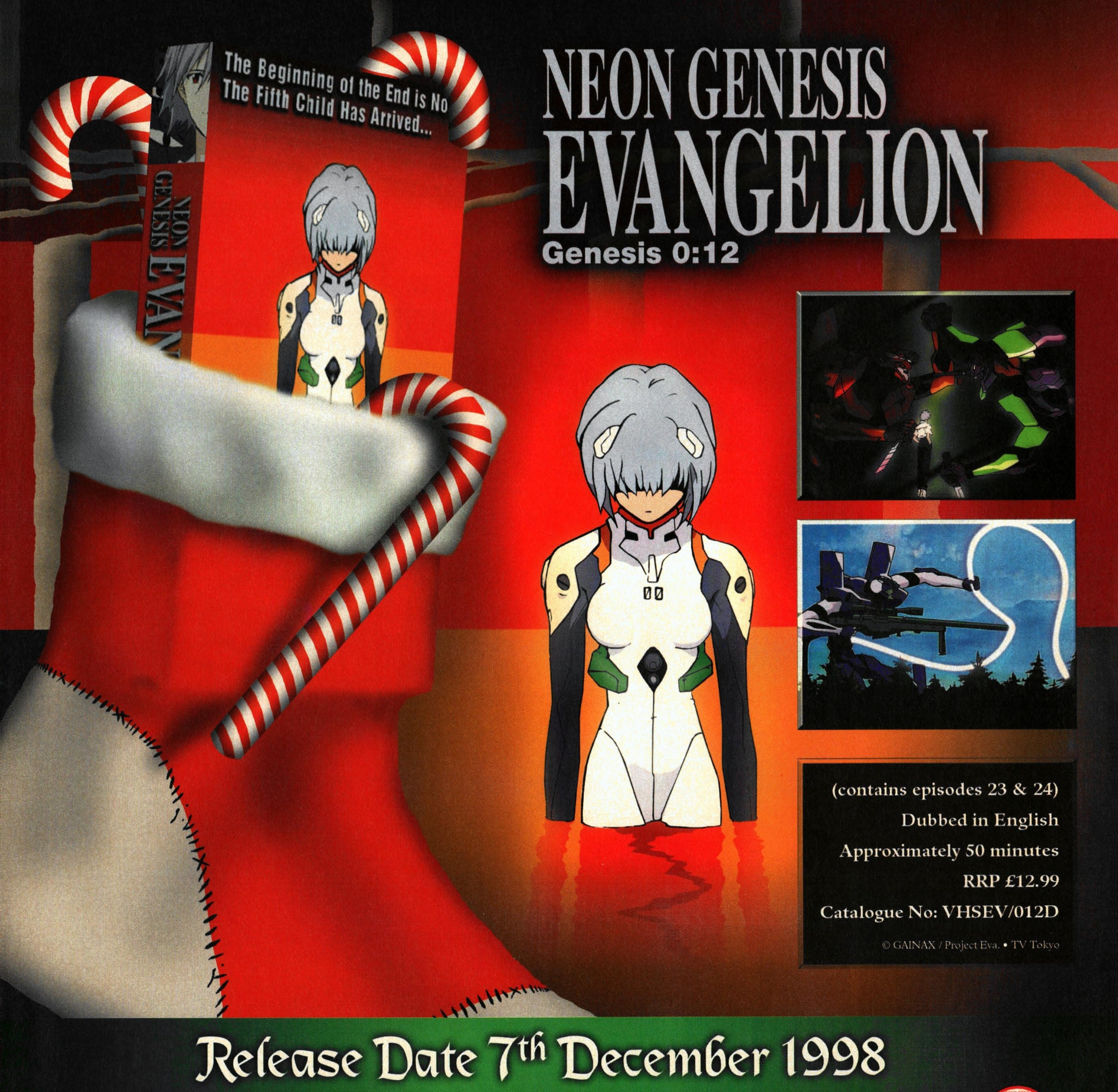
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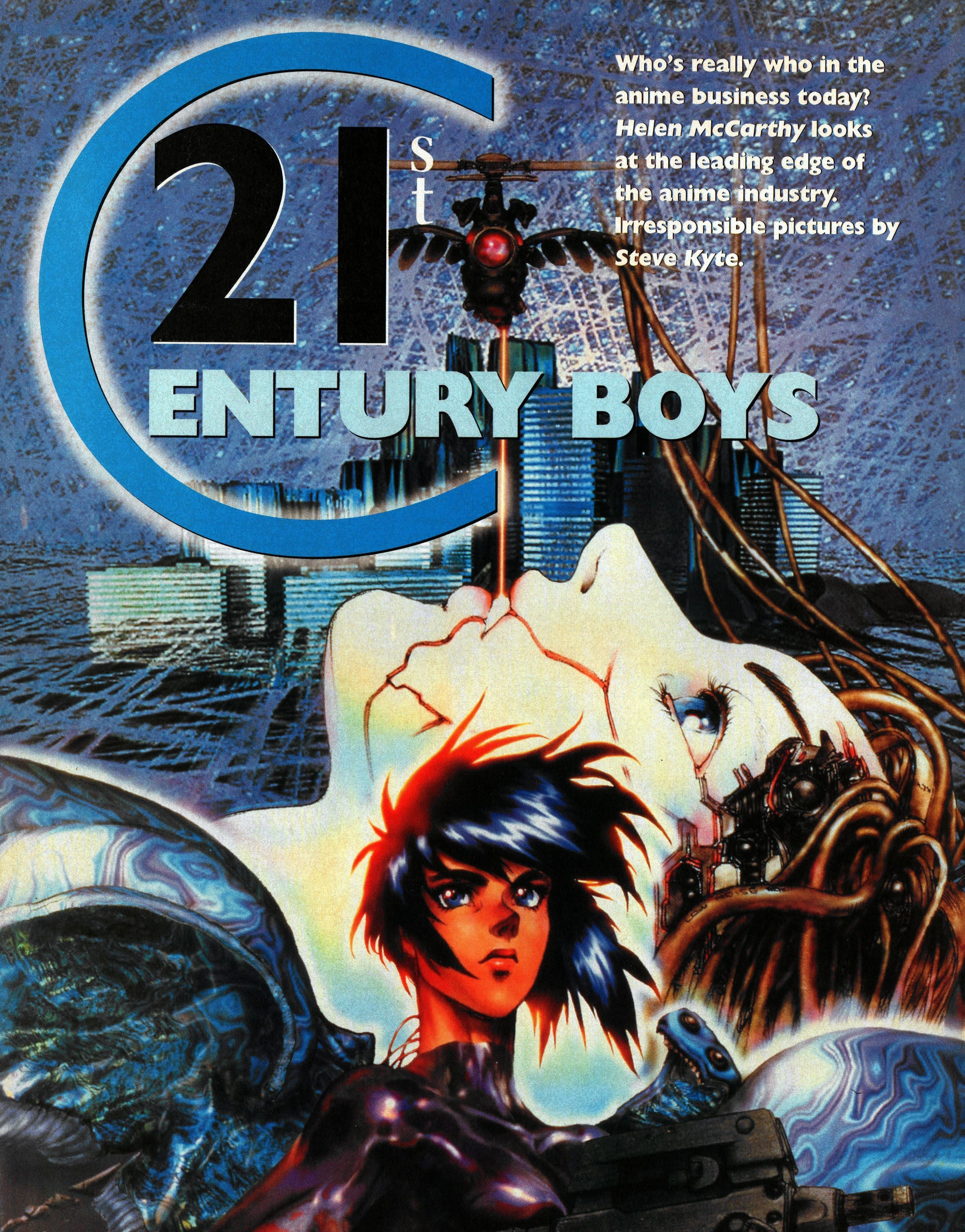
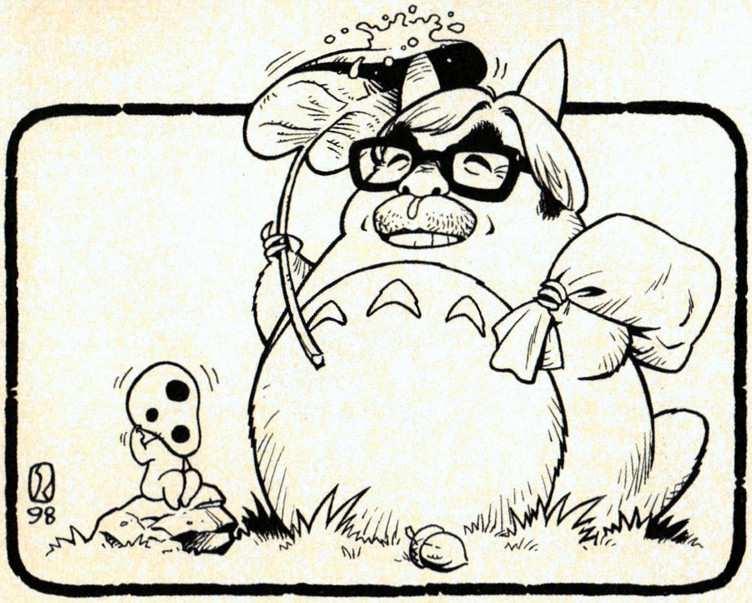
12

21st CENTURY BOYS

Who's really who in the anime business today? *Helen McCarthy* looks at the leading edge of the anime industry. Irresponsible pictures by *Steve Kyte*.





Hayao Miyazaki

Ghost in the Shell © Shirow/Kodansha/ Bandai Visual/Manga Entertainment

Memories © Otomo/ Akira Committee/ Kodansha

Kiki's Delivery Service © Kadono/ Nibariki/Tokuma Shoten

Perfect Blue © Takeuchi/Rex Entertainment/Oniro

Movie Maestro

Studio Ghibli, the production house he co-founded, has dominated the field of cinematic animation in Japan for well over a decade. Yet Hayao Miyazaki shouldn't be leading Studio Ghibli into the millennium at all. He "officially" retired from the Ghibli team in January this year, but the whole scenario was wiped out by the sudden and tragic death of his chosen heir, Yoshifumi Kondo, just days after his leaving ceremony. Back in the hot seat, Miyazaki has already staked a claim to more influence than most, thanks to the deal signed between his studio's backers, Tokuma, and the Disney Corporation. After years of rumour and gossip Disney bought the rights to market a group of Ghibli films throughout the world. Previous treatment of his work had not been entirely to his liking, and the Disney contract specifies that his work can't be cut or re-edited. The first US release under the new deal was *Kiki's Delivery Service*. *Castle In the Sky: Laputa,* and the maestro's latest movie, the record-breaking *Princess Mononoke*, will follow next year, with more to come.

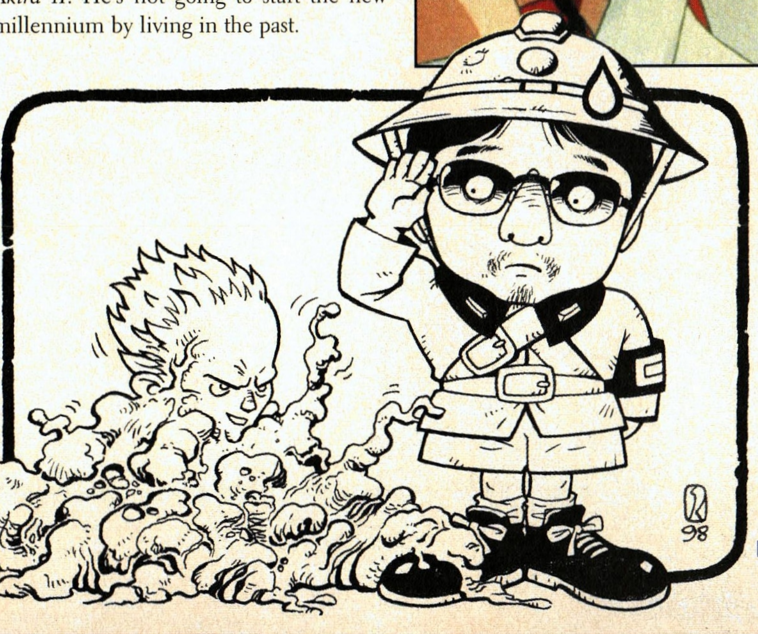
Meanwhile, Miyazaki has already announced his new project. The release date is tentatively set at "sometime in 1999", and while there's no title yet, it will be a story set in the future with a strong ecological theme. If the anime industry needs a leader to take it into the new millennium, the man who's been way ahead of the game for the last 15 years could well be the best choice for the job.

Leader Of The Pack

Revving engines, popping pills, rocking and rumbling, Katsuhiro Otomo's seminal *Akira* hit the West at full throttle in 1990 and created a new medium for a disaffected animation generation. A decade on, it's still the only anime film firmly lodged in Western cultural consciousness. Many journalists thought it was the first ever feature-length anime. Otomo was slapped with the high-octane, cutting-edge cyberpunk label, and despite his best efforts his fans have refused to let him shake it completely.

He sent a clear signal with his follow-up film, *Roujin Z*, a searing sideways glance at the politics of care of the elderly. It wasn't quite what his public were expecting, and was all the better for it. Otomo commented that if anime was stuck in the rut of pretty girls and big robots it would ultimately wither and die; it had to explore new ideas and new avenues. His own career has been dedicated to this principle ever since he debuted as a designer on Taro Rin's 1984 movie *Harmageddon*. He and Rin came together again on the anthology *Neo-Tokyo* in 1987, and in the same year he contributed to another anthology, *Robot Carnival.* His liking for the anthology form culminated in 1995's *Memories*, a three-hander based on his short story manga; his enthusiasm for encouraging the work of others also led to an executive producer credit on 1997's *Perfect Blue*, as a thank-you for making the necessary connections between author and studio to get the work onto film.

Most recently, his Victorian steampunk epic *Steam Boy*, due in 1999, and the future-conflict epic *Striker*, released this autumn, on which he's a supervising director, have been occupying his creative time. He was initially enthusiastic about CGI and the additional control and creative possibilities it gives a director, but has already been heard lamenting the restrictions it brings, forcing a director to re-use virtual sets just as if he were building them in the real world. Next up is screenwriting job, adapting Osamu Tezuka's *Metropolis* for his old friend Taro Rin. Just don't ask him when he's going to make *Akira II*. He's not going to start the new millennium by living in the past.



Katsuhiro Otomo

Wings of Honneamise © Gainax/Bandi Visual

Escaflowné © Sunrise

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Urusei Yatsutra © Takahashi/ Shogakukan/Kitty Film

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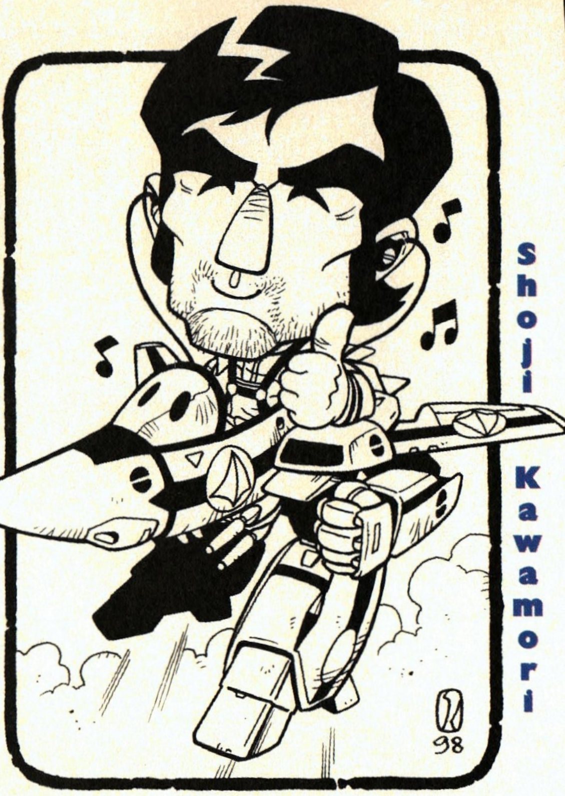
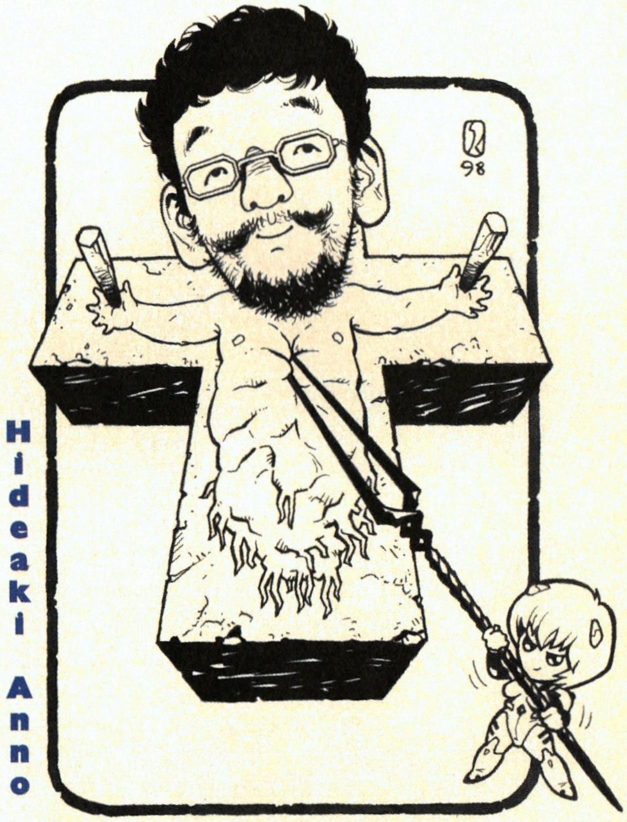


Top Gun

Shoji Kawamori was still a teenager when he was asked to provide some guest mecha designs for *Space Cruiser Yamato* as a result of his friendships with the staff at design house Studio Nue. He turned down an offer to work on the series because he didn't want to be distracted during his first year at college, but he soon took the first step on the slippery slope, providing a mech design for the *Captain Harlock* television series. Not long after he did *Technopolice 21C*, then started work on three potential projects. The one that went ahead was *Macross*. Before long, the young designer was so busy that he had to drop out of college, and when *Macross* hit Japan's TV screens in 1982, he was part of a massive success. Few, however, could have predicted that he'd still be part of it fifteen years later, or that his involvement would have extended beyond design to a more influential creative role.

At one point he said he'd never make another *Macross*, and *Macross II* was made without his input. In fact, he says he's never even seen it. Yet by 1994 he was back remaking it for a new era, working on *Macross Plus* and *Macross 7*. At the same time, he was extending his interest in real-life technology, designing for computer games, as well as *Cyber Formula*, *Patlabor* and a whole host of other projects. He loves all kinds of mechanical engineering and studies cars and planes extensively. Frequent trips to the US have given him the chance to research the latest developments in space flight at NASA and to fly in the hottest new planes. Yet the heavy metal kid of anime has another side: the romantic, epic sensibility which produced one of 1997's most magical series, *Vision of Escaflowné*, a tale of love, loss and betrayal in a neo-medieval world.

He continues to work on game projects and has a number of anime irons in the fire. Nowadays, he won't even rule out the possibility of more *Macross* stories. If a song is needed to save the world in the new millennium, you can be sure Shoji Kawamori will be there to provide it.

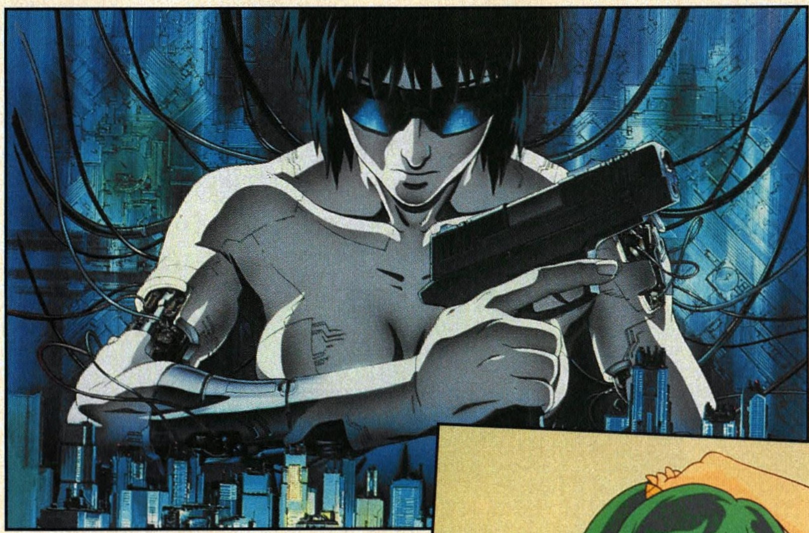


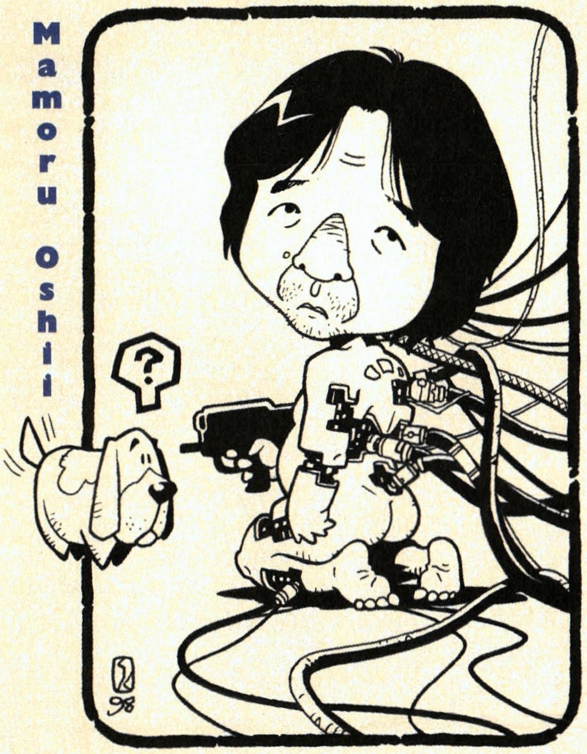
Tortured Soul

The thing to remember about Hideaki Anno is that he comes from Niigata. Niigata is where the action isn't: the provinces, the back of beyond. Anno's towering talent and unique creative vision spring at least in part from his own sense of himself as an outsider. He's one of those rare people for whom animation isn't just a job, but an attempt to wrestle a bit of himself down on celluloid, with the strong possibility that he'll lose the fight.

Consequently, outsiders have always been strongly featured in his work with Gainax, the creative partnership which he and his colleagues so brilliantly foreshadowed in the parody anime *Otaku no Video*. If ever there is an 'otaku planet', it will be made to the Gainax blueprint. The only element of their own massive success that Gainax didn't predict was the part which computer games would play in the mix; and back in 1982, with the personal computer still a vague prediction, few could have guessed at that. Nonetheless, computer games saved Gainax financially when their own creative standards threatened to suck them under. Despite the artistic success of their space-race movie *The Wings of Honneamise*, and the popularity of the 1991 television series *The Secret Of Blue Water*, a science fantasy epic centred on a girl's search for her identity in turn of the century Europe, Gainax came close to bankruptcy and Anno didn't create a new show for five years. Then, of course, the show he created stood the industry on its head. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* was watched by people who had either left anime behind years ago, or never watched it in the first place. The outsider Shinji and his team of misfit colleagues, kids in a world designed and run by adults, or adults who had lost the plot and had no choice but to run like rats through a baffling maze, had a whole new audience hanging on their every tormented breath.

Evangelion was successful because it broke the mould, but Anno was already turning his back on his new-found fame. His next project was the live-action *Love & Pop*, starring four young starlets; little could be more different from the angelic apocalypse of *Evangelion*. Anno won't make the anime industry wait another five years, but he won't go over the same ground either. This autumn, by way of diversion, he's directing and scripting a Gainax-produced TV series based on a girls' romance manga, *His Secret, Her Secret*, as well as rumoured involvement on Gainax's long-discussed *Blue Uru* multimedia experience. The boy from the back of beyond hasn't come this far to follow someone else's direction in future.





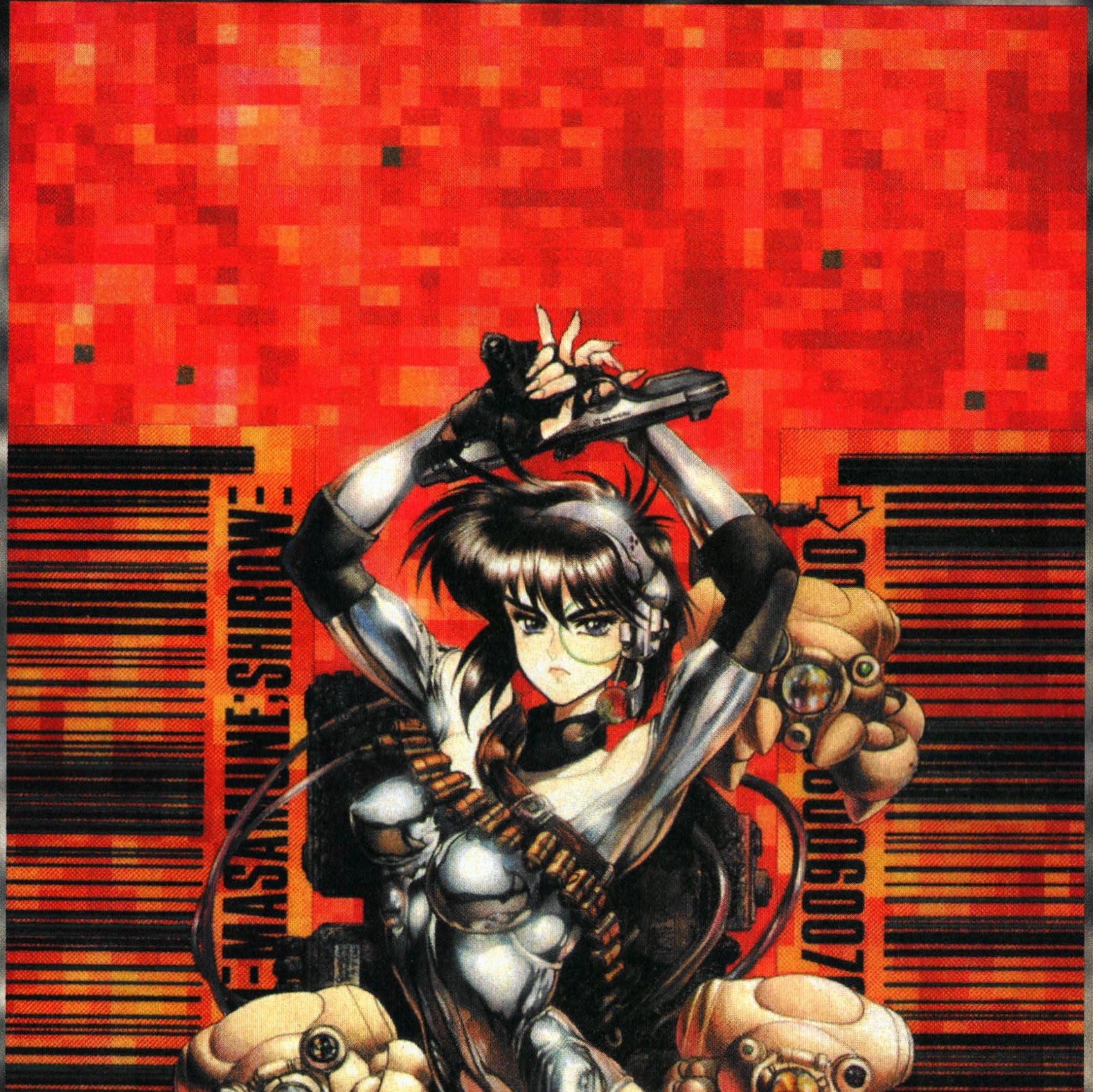
Man's Best Friend

Mamon Oshii is a director of popular mainstream anime whose private passions include beagles (his own Gabriel makes numerous appearances in *Ghost in the Shell*) and making obscure live-action films. Widely regarded as one of the safest and most skilful pairs of hands in the industry, he has worked successfully with material from creators as diverse as Rumiko Takahashi (he directed two *Urusei Yatsura* movies) and Masamune Shirow.

Oshii is a founder member of the Headgear group, whose coffee-shop brainstorming sessions on the anime they'd really like to make led to the production of the legendary *Mobile Police Patlabor*. Working with scriptwriter Kazunori Ito and the designer Akemi Takada, the director created a group of funny, fallible cops whose humanity and warmth won the hearts of a wide range of fans. The use of 'patlabors' (patrol robots) as just a bigger, faster squad car kept the focus of the show where Oshii likes it best – on the characters and situations, not the technology. In just the same way, when he was approached to direct the film of Masamune Shirow's hit manga *Ghost in the Shell*, he stripped the convolutions of the plot down to one basic metaphor, turning what could have been a cyber-chilled dystopia into a romance between the machine and human consciousness, cutting the complexity into an assimilable 75-minute lecture on evolution as an act of faith.

He won't be directing the new *Patlabor XIII* movie. His current projects include overseeing the *Manwolf* movie (related to his *Hellhounds* comic) and an SF live-actioner being trailed in the Japanese magazines as *GRM. Record of Garm War*. So far we've seen beautiful computer graphics but no script and no plot outline. Oshii is playing this one close to his chest. The only thing that's certain is that his beloved Gabriel will be in there somewhere.●

BEING digital



MADE
MASAMUNE:SHIROW
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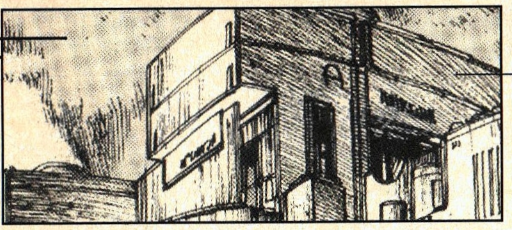
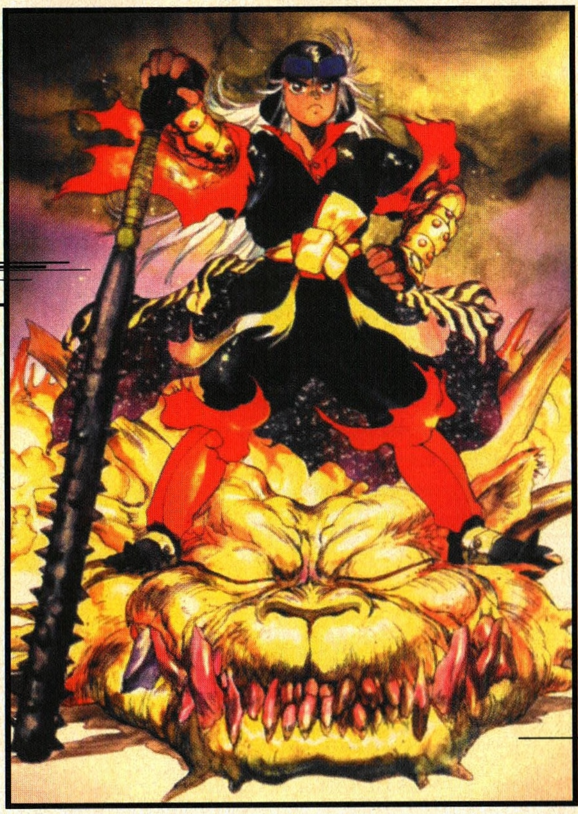
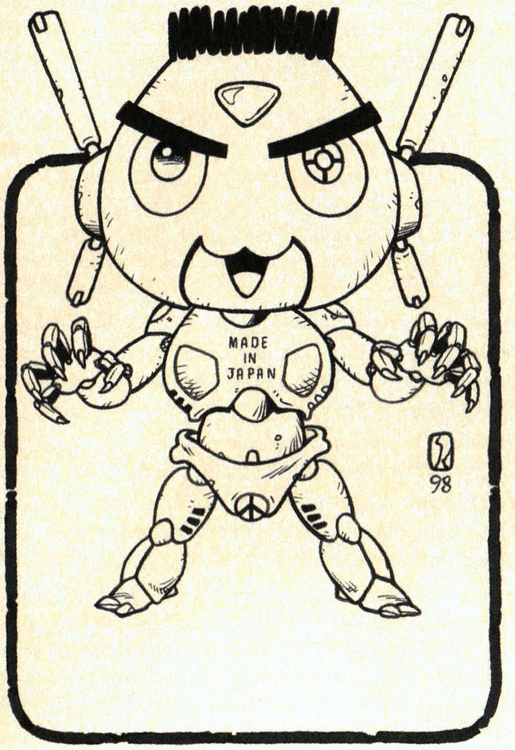
Masamune Shirow was in the lobby of the Orient Hotel in Kobe. *Frederik L. Schodt* had him bugged. Then he e-mailed this interview to us from a Newton message pad on a plane above Toronto, while running from the secret police. Feeling left behind...?





Masamune Shirow



I'm on the "bullet train," zipping south from Tokyo to the port city of Kobe at 150 miles per hour. I'm going to interview Masamune Shirow, the reclusive creator of *Ghost in the Shell*. Shirow doesn't give in-person interviews. It's taken me nearly a year to arrange this one, and it's only possible because I'm one of the translators of his notoriously complex work. I've never met the man and have no idea what he looks like, but I feel like I've lived inside his head for a long time. I know it's an interesting place.

There's been a lot of weirdness in Japan recently, a sort of reality-disconnect that brings to mind some of Shirow's dystopian sci-fi themes. First there was the Kobe Earthquake of 1995, which killed 6,500 people and destroyed much of the city, including Shirow's house. Then there were nerve gas attacks in Tokyo subways by the fanatical AUM cult, run by a guru apparently in a hurry to create his apocalyptic visions. Most recently, nearly seven hundred people were hospitalized with symptoms ranging from nausea to grand mal seizures after watching the strobing visuals of the *Pocket Monster* anime; this, in the world's capital of animation.

Japan isn't making a smooth transition from a hardware to a software-based economy. Everyone worries that Japan is behind the West in the network revolution, and in Internet usage. But whereas last year all the kids had pagers, this year everyone is crossing the street talking on 'PHS' phones the size of candy bars, many of which have text messaging capability, not to mention e-mail, fax, and even anti-bacterial coatings to ward off germs. A magazine claims that the once invincible karaoke industry is now in a slump, partly because young people are spending all their money on communications charges; some of the phones retail for one yen.

In the last year or so there's been a tiny slump in the growth rate of manga sales, and industry executives fret about possible erosion of readership, especially with competition from video games and the Internet. Mainstream publishers bemoan the dearth of artists capable of creating original stories; Like the economy in general, the Japanese manga industry is a victim of an overemphasis on mass production, an over-centralisation in Tokyo, and an education and value system that overemphasises conformity.

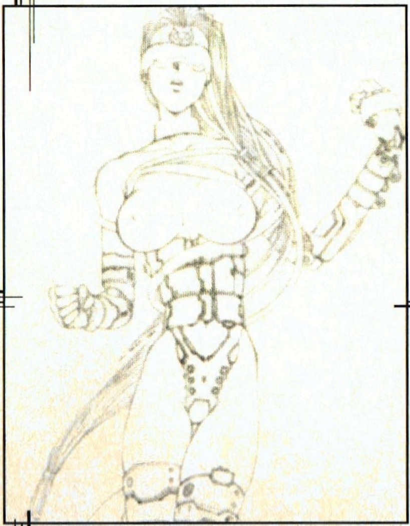
Which brings us back to Masamune Shirow. Shirow was born in Kobe in 1961, and has always lived there, which makes him very unusual. Tokyo is the overwhelming centre of today's Japan, and most successful people, even if born elsewhere, soon move there. As a manga artist, Shirow also works by himself, at his own pace, which is considered very slow in Japan. Most successful artists today employ many assistants, on a volume-production treadmill with hungry publishers, a treadmill which is very difficult to get off.

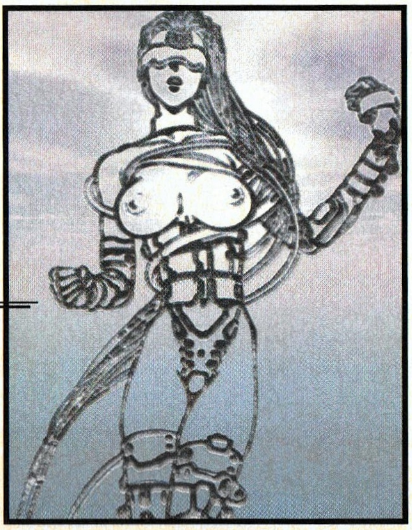
Shirow's manga are characterised by their high tech themes and pseudo-realistic "mecha", an information-dense visual and narrative structure, and an entertaining, often tongue-in-cheek approach that never lets anything get too serious. Most of his works are science fiction, with alluring female police officer protagonists. The exception is *Orion*, a spoof on the worlds of Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto, and quantum physics.

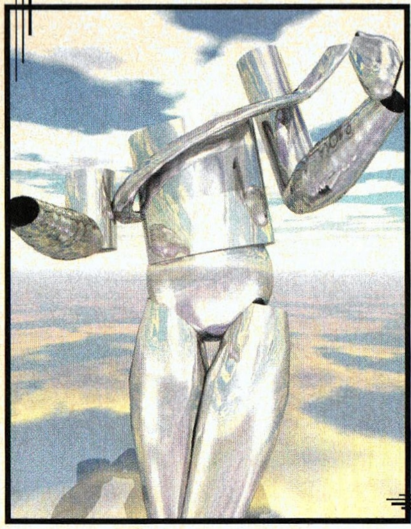
From the beginning, Shirow's work has appealed to a special type of manga fan, many of whom are not Japanese. He is perhaps the only major Japanese manga artist who has had all of his paperback compilations published in English. By the time *Ghost in the Shell*, started appearing in English in 1995, he had a cult following. Still, his widest exposure has come not through the *Ghost in the Shell* manga, but through the anime version released in 1995. *Ghost in the Shell* had a relatively large budget, and was financed partly by Manga Entertainment. Directed by Mamoru Oshii with a foreign audience in mind, *Ghost in the Shell* was stripped of Shirow's innate playfulness and wacky humour, and in many senses was a completely different work, more Oshii's than Shirow's. Yet in one week of August, 1995, the video topped *Billboard's* U.S domestic video sales chart, and sold over a quarter of a million copies.

Mr Ogasawara, Shirow's buddy and defacto manager, meets me at Kobe station. Since I'm not allowed to photograph Shirow or visit his workplace, he's agreed to take me around sites in Kobe that have a connection to Shirow's world, and prep me for the interview. We visit the famous Kiku Masamune sake brewery, which might be the inspiration for part of Shirow's pen-name, tour a few of the rebuilt earthquake sites, and then meet Shirow at the Oriental Hotel. Shirow's a comfortable but somewhat shy person, who speaks softly with a trace of the region's dialect. And, of course, he's wearing a tiny portable phone.

Frederik L. Schodt: *Ghost in the Shell* and other works of yours are filled with technological information, both real and not-real, on quantum physics, AI, robotics and networks. Where do you get this information from, and how do you process it?



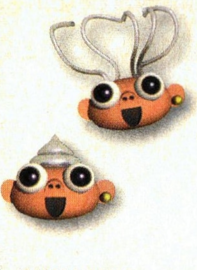




Masamune Shirow: I read books and magazines, and I watch television, especially the science programs on NHK, the quasi-public channel here. I sometimes visit the facilities they have at the local universities, but books are the main thing.

What sort of books have had the most influence on you?

The ones I find most fascinating recently are about insects. Entomologists apparently don't have many places to publish their work, and as a result, their writing tends to be especially interesting when they do publish.



Many Japanese artists seem fascinated by insects, or at least were fascinated by them as children. As a child did you run around in the hills of Kobe with a collector's net?

Sure... Most Japanese boys love bugs, especially the large Atlas or Stag beetles. They stimulate your imagination. They're almost like toys.

Much sci-tech information in your manga seems to be delivered as a sort of background, ambient noise, which many readers probably don't understand right away but eventually soak up unconsciously through osmosis. Is this a deliberate strategy?

No, it's not something I do deliberately. It merely happens because of the way the stories are structured. I don't deliberately have a lot of explanations about the reality in which the characters live. To the characters this information is obvious, and natural; the readers enter the world of the characters, and it should ideally become a "natural" world for them, too.

Do you ever get complaints from people who can't understand what's going on in your stories because there's too much complicated information?

Sometimes readers do complain. I realise my stories should be easy to read, and I try to make them easy to read. It's a tug of war; I don't want to make the stories too simple, nor do I want to make them too complex. I struggle to find a good balance. I know it's tough for the readers sometimes.

I personally like your information-dense approach, but I have to confess that translating the stories can be tough. I once spent days searching for a scientific term in a library, only to learn later that you had made it up.

[laughter]

In works such as Orion and to a certain extent in *Ghost in the Shell*, you seem to be attempting to fuse science and technology with religion and spirituality. Is there a model you're using for this?

ANKO
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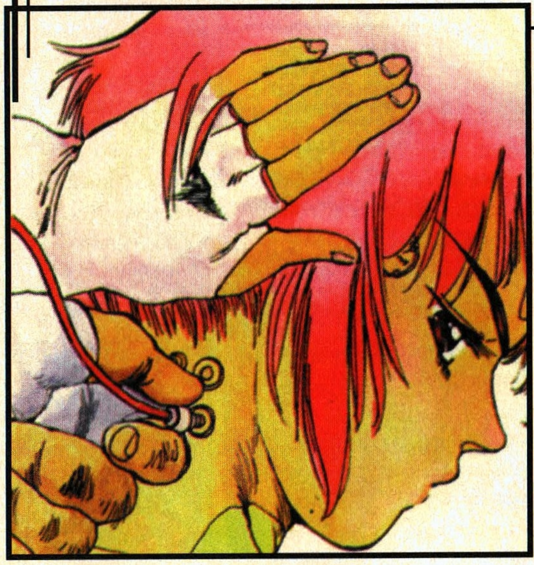
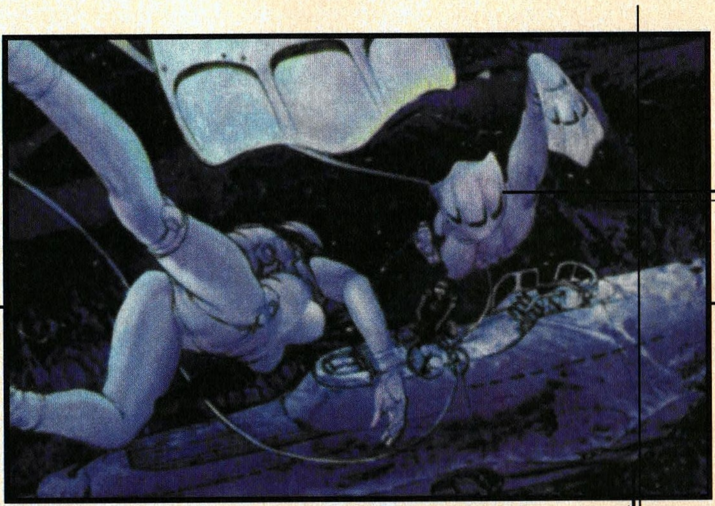
PEACE





Again, it's not something I'm consciously trying to do, and I don't have a specific model. But I do think that science and technology are becoming more and more like "magic." In other words, the experts know what's going on, but the average person doesn't have a clue. To most people, things are becoming more and more of a "black box"; they just know that if they input something into the box, they'll get a specific result. This is especially true of computers. You have to be an expert to know why certain things happen and to understand the principles involved, but the average person isn't an expert. Most people just use computers because they're convenient; they can't explain the principles involved, so they in effect treat the computers like magic. This doesn't mean computers are actually magic. The worlds of science and magic are obviously separate; but in terms of our consciousness and the way we perceive things, they are converging. That may be why, in my work, it may seem as though I'm trying to integrate sci-tech and religion, because both do seem to be converging.

The religious approach in my work is probably closest to animism. When I say "religion," I don't mean something controlled by some omnipotent "God"; I just mean "gods" in the sense of Nature. It's like having a tsunami caused by an angry woman god, that sort of thing, almost a fable or allegory. If you see a dragon emerging from a pond, rising to heaven and then making rain fall, well, that's like having water evaporate and later falling as rain; it's the same phenomenon described in different ways. It has the same nuance for people observing the same phenomenon; it's just arranged more "scientifically" in one way than in the other. In *Orion*, I tried to play with this concept.

Some years ago I did some research on the robotics industry in Japan, and I was particularly fascinated by an organised movement to fuse science and technology with religion, specifically with Buddhism. The Mukta Institute, which was led by roboticist Masahiro Mori and other scientists, for example, was trying to use Buddhism as a vehicle to stimulate creativity in research. Dr Mori himself believes that by developing robots humans could better understand themselves and achieve Buddha-mind. Have you heard of this institute and by any chance are you a member of it?

No, but it sounds very interesting. Creating humanoid robots involves seeing how much you can replicate human structure, which in turn involves understanding what it means to be human. In that sense, current robots indicate that we understand basic human muscle and bone structure, that's all. Recently, though, some people say that emotions can be explained through chemistry, so then the question becomes, if emotions are chemical, what are we? The fact that we *think* there must be something more than chemicals at work may indicate that there *are* other factors. So in that sense there's room for a lot more research. When we add something using chemical reactions (such as some sort of new bio computer) to robots, then we'll be getting a lot closer to humans. One problem with the Mukta approach might be that the Buddha nature is something very hard for humans to understand. Even if a robot could be created that recognised and understood Buddha and tried to explain it to lots of humans, the question is, how many humans would be able to comprehend it? [laughs]

You have lots of robots in your manga. Where does your own interest in robots come from, and does your reputed interest in spiders have anything to do with your robot designs?

I don't know why, but the heroes Japanese children first identify with in manga and animation all seem to be robots. This is true of characters like Doraemon or Ararechan, and many others. As a result, most people have implanted in their heads the idea that robots are all-powerful friends, or pals. And that's probably reflected in my manga. Also, if you go to factories in Japan today, the workers are almost all robots and this has a big impact on people, too.

If my robots look like spiders, it's probably just because I like spiders. It's also related, though, to the fact that until recently, until Honda developed its bipedal robot, bipeds were regarded as fundamentally unstable, and it was thought that the more legs, the more stable the structure, so most robots had at least four or six legs.

I used to spend quite a bit of time observing spiders. I was particularly fascinated by what we call "fly-catchers", the "jumping spiders." These are prowlers that don't weave webs. They're

Shirow cartoon by and © Steve Kyte.

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Ghost in the Shell anime © 1995 Shirow, Kodansha, Bandai Visual, Manga Entertainment.

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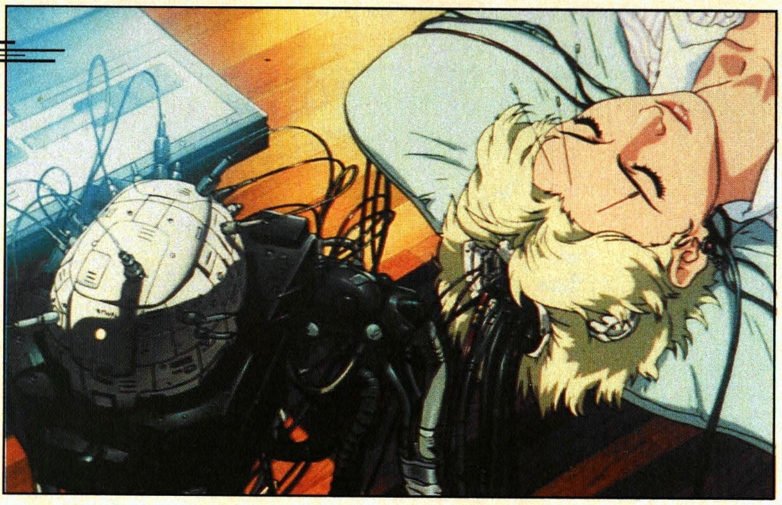


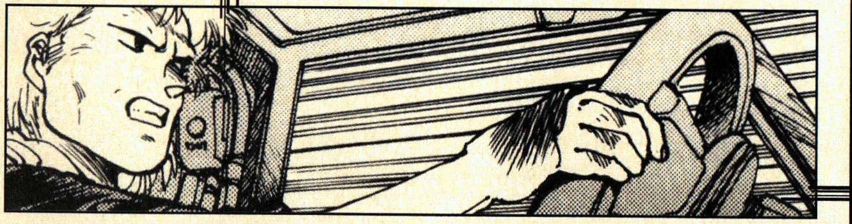
like robots. They may be thinking, but they're life forms close to being robots with a goal programmed into them. They have a purpose. They carefully observe things, timing their attack. They seem quite intelligent.

The explosion in popularity of the Net is often said to have been a huge shock to Japan. Even today, despite huge efforts to catch up, Japan is said to be quite a ways behind the US. Since *Ghost in the Shell* and other manga of yours feature a highly networked future, do you think this is a reason for their popularity in North America?

I don't know, but I suspect that my themes of networks and computers and network crimes seem very timely in America. In Japan, these things don't seem so real, but in America, with the diffusion of the Internet, more people are probably interested in them.

It seems that in Japan, when people talk about the Net, it's a still a little different than what people are talking about in the US. Perhaps we don't have enough optical fibre laid, or perhaps the communications charges are too high. Whatever it is, the philosophy seems different. We also seem to have deviated some the main advantage of the Internet, which is the idea that the maximum number of people should derive the maximum benefit from it.

In *Ghost in the Shell* everyone seems to be wired. When I look at people in Japan today, everyone seems to be wiring up, although in a different way than the US., mainly through PHS phones. Do you think Japan will evolve in a different direction in terms of the Internet?

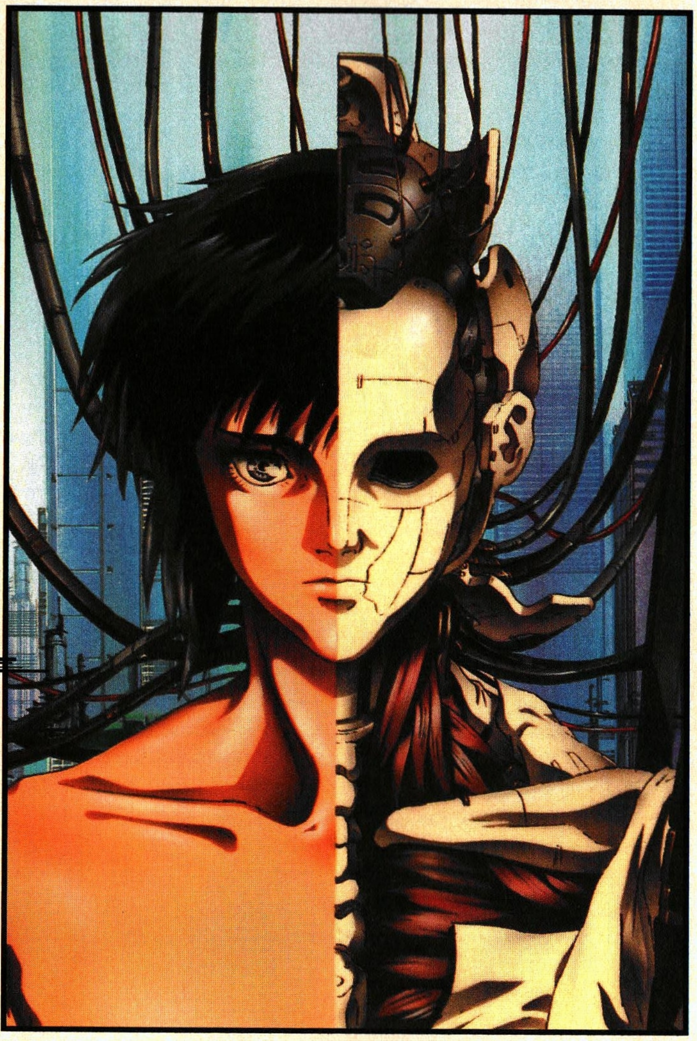


Japan will eventually fall more and more into step with the West. Still, in Japan people have traditionally not put a lot of emphasis on specific expressions of feeling or declarations of intent. Instead, we tend to look at each other's face and at the nuances of what is being said, and then try to determine if the other party is interested in doing business or whatever. Of course, the worst part of this emphasis on nuances and vagueness manifests itself in corruption among politicians and businessmen. But the traditions of communicating here are nonetheless probably more suited to telephones; telephones are better at transmitting nuances, you can read people's nuances in the subtle intonation of their voice, and even by the time of day that they make their calls. With the Internet, this very Japanese style of interaction and of determining others' intentions gets diminished. For example, when we have more images involved, everyone here will probably try to look really good in front of the camera; they'll start posing. It may even be harder then to differentiate between people's true intentions, the surface intentions or reality. Ironically, it may be easier to distinguish between these with phone communication.

To many foreigners, Japan appears to be a very neat, orderly society, but the future Japan you depict in your manga sometimes seems very messy and complicated and multi-racial and confusing. Do you foresee not only a variety of peoples, but also cyborgs and robots coexisting in Japan, as fully functioning members of society?

Ideally, everyone should be able to live where they want to, and in the multiracial sense Japan will probably become much more similar to the West. In terms of robots being an equal part of the mix, it would be great fun [laughs], but I don't see it happening in my lifetime.

One problem would be, if a robot becomes so advanced that it can co-exist on an equal basis with humans, is it really a robot? Perhaps it's just a human made of different materials...[laughs]. Of course, you could argue that the robots that can't think at all, the ones working in our factories today, are already coexisting with humans. When we get to floor cleaning robots, vacuum cleaner robots running around and so forth, they'll probably seem a lot more human-like. The real problem is when we get to true humanoid robots. What happens when the robot trips and injures the kid? Imagine the lawsuits.



One thing striking about Japan is the aggressive, optimistic attitude with which many technologies are pursued. There seems to be little of the deep-seated anti-technology sentiment that exists in the West, sentiment recently exemplified by the former scientist, Ted Kaczynski. Do you think an anti-technology movement will ever emerge in Japan?

I think the possibility of that's very low. People here don't seem to feel much stress from science and technology. Other issues: the education system, a belief that the legal system's inadequate, or that the social welfare system isn't developed enough; these are things that people worry more about. And of course, technology is ultimately only a problem in the way it's used by people; it's not a problem in and of itself.

Do you foresee a smooth integration of the technologies you depict in your manga (the nanotechnology, micro machines, advanced networking, and genetic engineering) in the Japan of the future?

I think they'll be accepted without problem by the average person. The real problem will be the legal system. Japan's ridiculously slow in this area, an example being organ transplants, which were argued about for ever and ever and just started to become possible recently. Whether it's organ transplants or micro machines or cloning, it will take ages to cover these things in the legal system. But the average person will probably accept them very quickly.

People tend to want to think in the same terms here; Japan still doesn't have much emphasis on what you might call "individualism" in West, so this means that if everyone has some neat high tech product you'll want one, too... People want to be the same, which is a reason that the technologies can diffuse so fast and be so accepted. And it's also a reason Japan may be one of the most lucrative markets in the world for new technologies. But on the other hand if there are any problems in the introduction of the technology, it means that everything stops. If everything goes okay, no problem. The issue becomes a lot more complicated when the technology directly affects our bodies. An example would be when people start talking about directly injecting micro machines. It all depends on how the technologies are positioned and legitimised...

Do you think mankind will be able to cope with all the new technologies in the future?

I hope so. We all need to try to make sure that happens. If we do want technology to be useful for all mankind in the future, though, we'll need to do something about the growing gap between the rich and the poor. We'll probably need to create some sort of compassionate capitalism that has more social guarantees built into it, or else the worst part of capitalism (where the strong always triumph over the weak and the income gap widens) will just get worse. I'm not saying we should go back to socialism, just that we probably will need something in between, something with more balance. It's something I'd like to see the experts get to work on, and of course [ironic laugh] it's something we as individuals should all be thinking about seriously, too.

In Japan today, manga comprise nearly 40% of all published books and magazines, and manga artists have become media celebrities, sought for their opinions on everything from art to politics. Do you think this is a good thing?

Being able to express your opinion is great. But audiences have a responsibility to make sure that the opinions being expressed are expert opinions, based on solid data. Cartoonists are ultimately just cartoonists, so I have a few doubts right now about myself pontificating on the state of the world [laughs]. But as long as it's clearly my own, individual opinion, I *guess* it's okay...

Have you ever been overseas, and in this age, the virtual age, do you think it's necessary anymore?

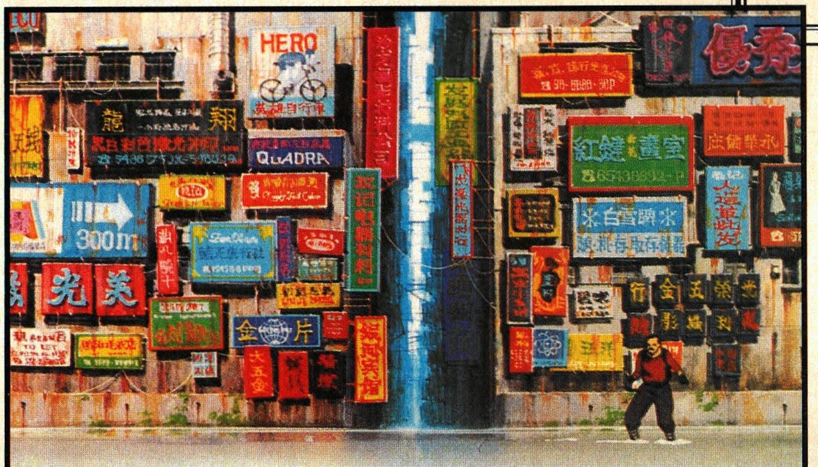
No, I've never been overseas, but I do think it's necessary... There's still a difference between reality and the virtual world. The virtual version has to be programmed or input by someone, so nothing in it's totally unpredictable. In the real world, all sorts of unexpected things happen, and all sorts of unexpected discoveries can be made... A totally perfect virtual reality is still a long ways off; to be able to totally replicate the natural world means we'd have to totally under stand it. As long as we're still burning off the forests, we have a long ways to go...

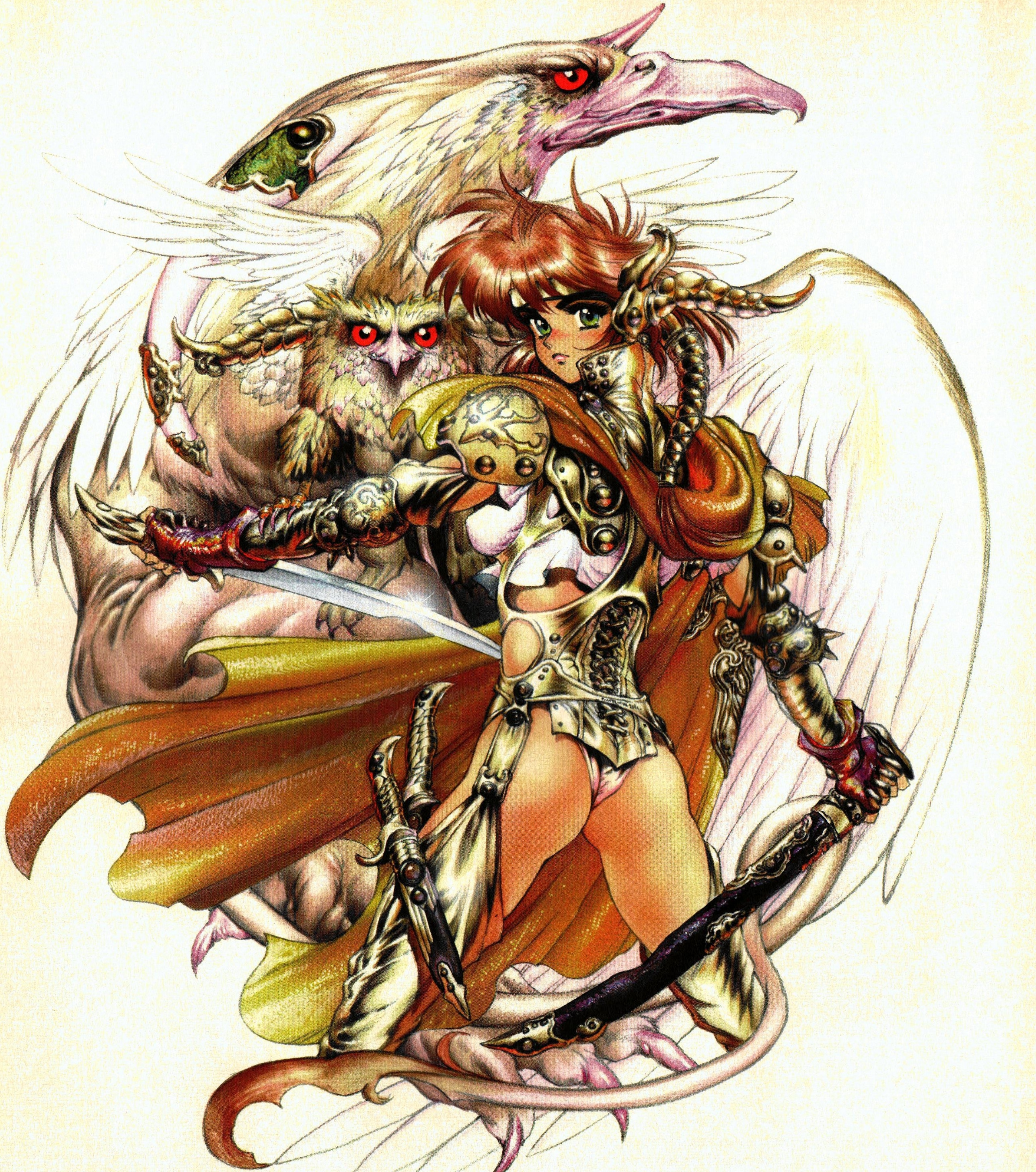
You have lots of fans in America and Europe. Do you think you might ever travel there to visit them?

I might, but I'm afraid of airplanes, and it's hard to find the time...

Later that night, on the way back to Tokyo on the Bullet train, I listen to the tape recording of our conversation. To my relief it has picked up Shirow's voice in the noisy hotel lobby, but to my surprise it had also picked up and amplified something I hadn't even been aware of during our conversation: the almost incessant chirping of portable phones being used by people around us... ●

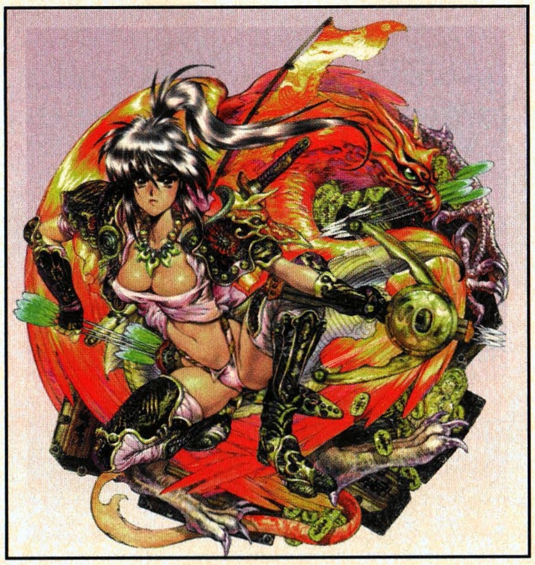
Copyright 1998, Frederik L. Schodt Thanks to Mr Ogasawara of Seishinsha for arranging this interview. Frederik L. Schodt has posted an *Ambient Shirow* collection of his Kobe photographs on his website at www.jai2.com.





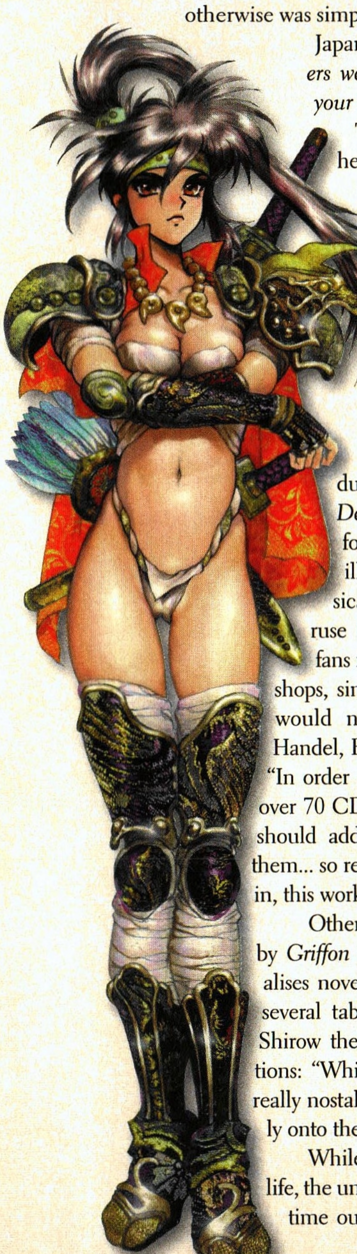
Cathy Sterling checks out Intron Depot 2

State *of the* Art



Although *Intron Depot 2 – Blades* consists predominantly of fantasy art, the skill and technology that went into creating it was anything but low-tech. "One of the best things about computers," writes Masamune Shirow, "is that they allow lots of trial and error, which makes it easy to create different versions... at some point in the future I'd like to create some software that allows you, the viewer, to have fun changing the various elements independently." The illustrations in his new collection, *Intron Depot 2*, span the period from when he was working with old-style ink and paint, to the present day when the majority of his work is produced inside a computer. "The images I create with computer graphics are usually limited to the backgrounds, so the important thing is that they coexist harmoniously with the characters themselves.... While uing the technology, though, there have been so many improvements made in computer processing power and in animated applications that it's been both exhausting and exciting trying to keep up. (Oh no – gotta read another one of those fat computer manuals!)"

Intron Depot 2 will answer a lot of fans' questions about Shirow's recent activities. His involvement in *Landlock*, trumpeted in some unscrupulous quarters as a "new Shirow", is revealed in *Intron Depot 2* to be merely a handful of sketches. Shirow never claimed to be intensely involved in the project, but the temptation to imply otherwise was simply too much for many ad-men, both in Japan and abroad. *[Although MM45 readers were warned off, we do these things for your benefit – Ed.].*



The sheer volume of work in *ID2* also helps explain why some of Shirow's other projects have slowed down. According to Shirow, It was Mamoru Oshii's film version of *Ghost in the Shell* that set him off on the road from being "not just a manga artist, but a 'manga art illustrator'." Shirow's distinctive art was suddenly in demand from previously unknown quarters, and he was rushed off his feet producing the illustrations included in *Intron Depot 2*. These include art commissioned for a bewildering array of products, from illustrations to novels to cover-art for classical CDs. These last were a cunning ruse by Toshiba EMI to drag manga fans into the classical sections of music shops, since a die-hard Shirow aficionado would now have to invest in Haydn, Handel, Brahms and Rossini. Says Shirow: "In order to select the tracks, I had to buy over 70 CDs (I was also given quite a few, I should add) and spend hours listening to them... so relative to the amount of time I put in, this work wasn't particularly lucrative."

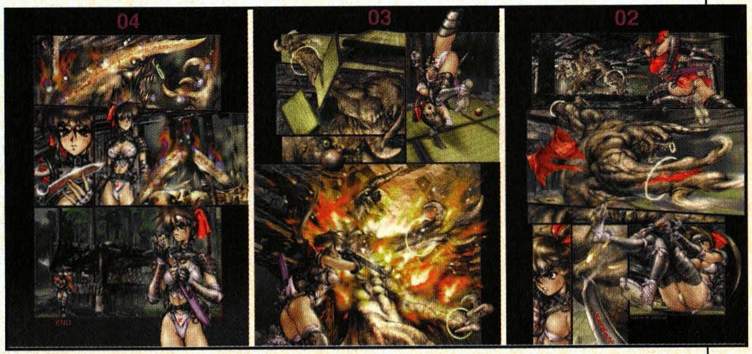
Other illustrations were commissioned by *Griffon* magazine, a periodical that serialises novels. This explains the presence of several tableaux of mythical birds, but for Shirow these pictures had different associations: "While making this illustration, I felt really nostalgic because I was painting directly onto the actual paper surface."

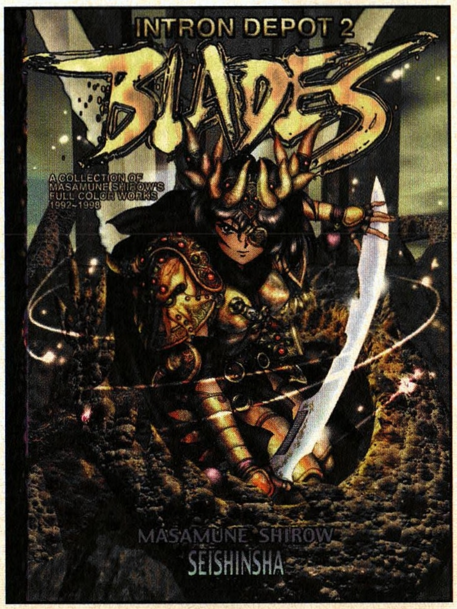
While Shirow muses in his notes about life, the universe and everything, even taking time out to discuss the pros and cons of rock-throwing, a lot of space is given up to the wonder of modern technology. "I don't even consider myself a computer graphics artist," he writes. "I'm thankful for digital technology, especially when I think of how much work it used to be getting my air compressor off the shelf and rigging it up just to add a few highlights to a drawing. Of course, using digital tools there's also the temptation to apply airbrush effects everywhere, so there's good and bad aspects."

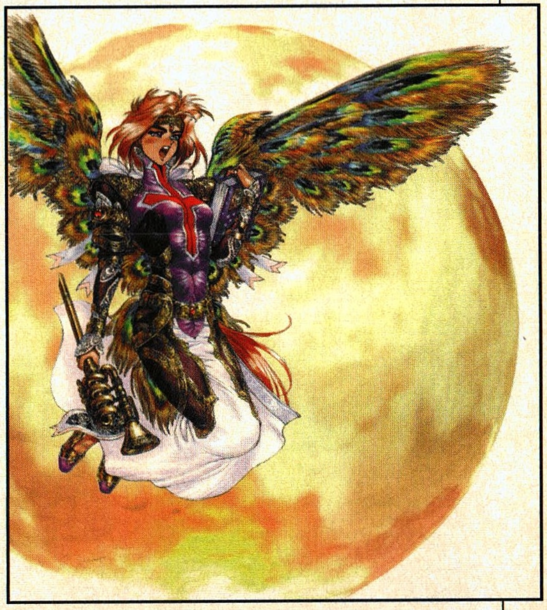
Reading between the lines, *Intron Depot 2* is also a glimpse inside the mind of a commercial artist forced to watch as many of his creations are buried. Were it not for the fan base guaranteed to snap up the book on publication, many of the pictures in it would be lost to posterity, commissioned but cancelled before they could be used for their original purpose. In this regard, Shirow is already a victim of his own success. Projects like *Landlock* will pay hard cash for the most peripheral of involvements, his talent alone is enough to sell classical music and computer games, but ultimately, he runs the risk of becoming known for his name, and not his ability.

Name alone clearly means nothing to Shirow; if it did, he would have leapt out of the closet and taken the credit for his work. But this rich and successful man still hides in the shadows, happy to let his art speak for itself. By refusing to be identified or photographed, he ensures that his fans only see his work, not his personality. The fact that many companies seem to be paying for his name and not his immense talent, is something that only careful management can prevent from becoming a problem in future. ●

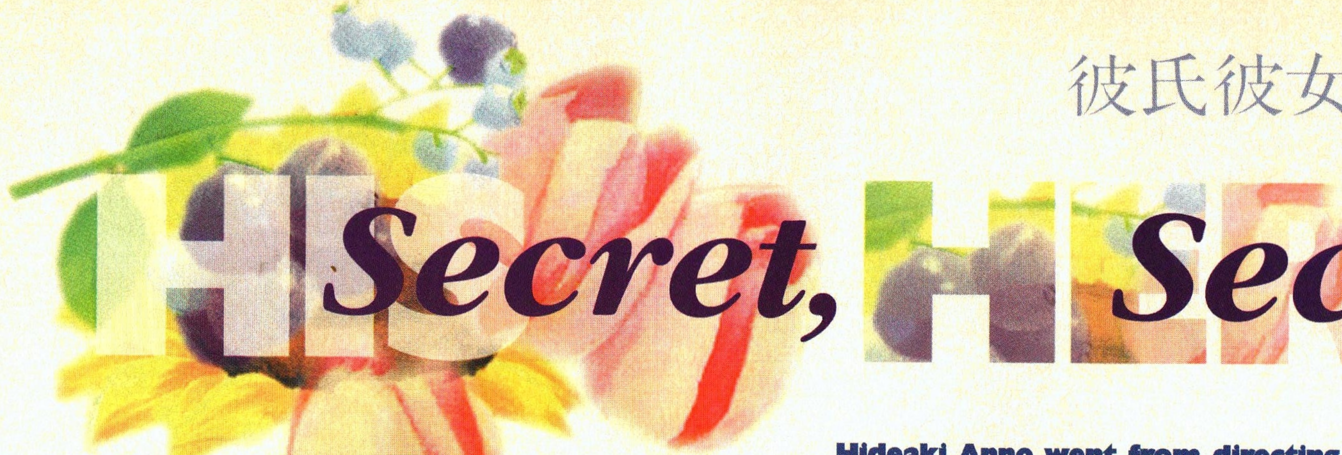
Intron Depot is published in a bilingual English-Japanese edition, by Seishinsha in Japan and Dark Horse in the USA. The pictures and quotes used here in are © Masamune Shirow 1998, and used with permission. Thanks to Toren Smith (Studio Proteus) and Shigehiko Ogasawara (Seishinsha).




INTRON DEPOT 2
BLADES
A COLLECTION OF MASAMUNE SHIROW'S FULL COLOR WORKS 1992~1998
MASAMUNE SHIROW
SEISHINSHA



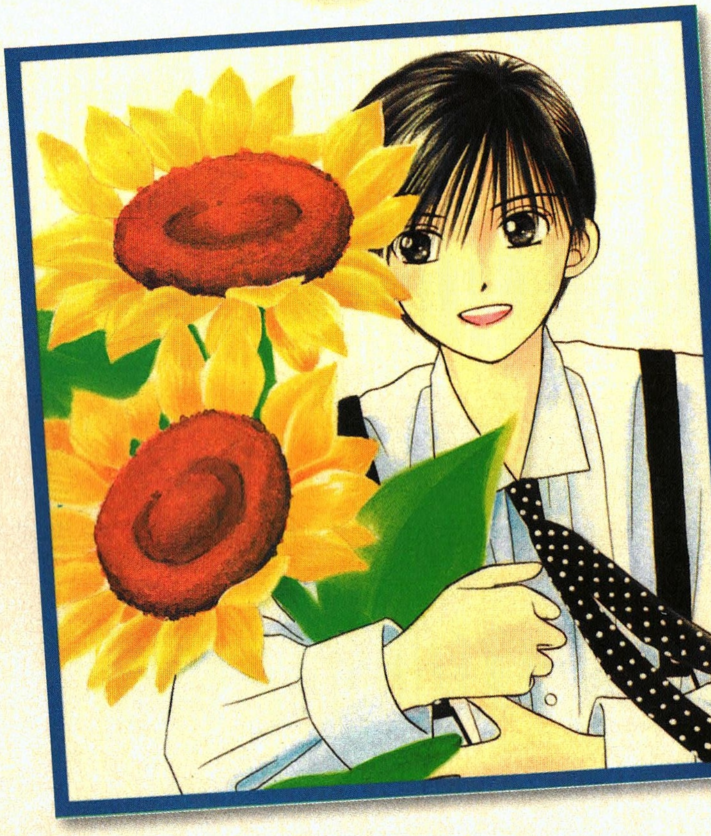
彼氏彼女の事情

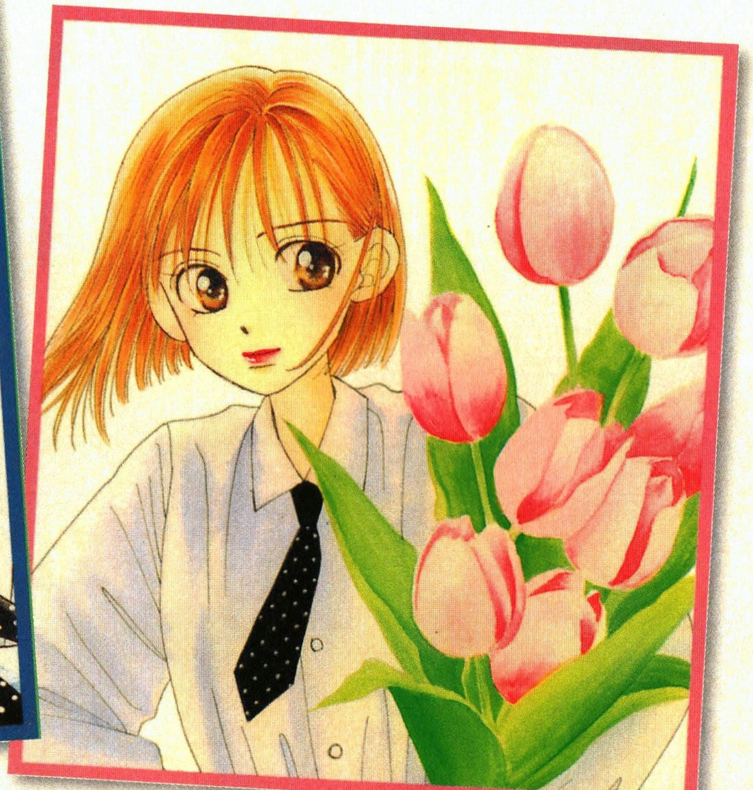


HIS Secret, HER Secret

Hideaki Anno went from directing the apocalypse in *Evangelion* to directing a home-room affair. But just what is Masami Tsuda's original manga about?

By Motoko Tamamuro and Lee Brimmicombe-Wood

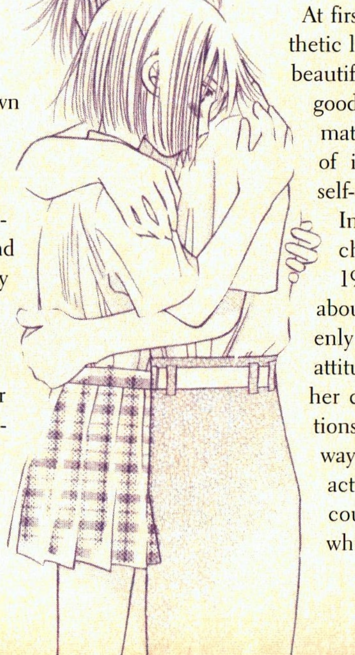




Japanese high school comedy romance comics sometimes seem stamped out by a cookie cutter. With reader identification a primary requisite for creators and editors, common themes occur and recur; most of them variations on the evergreen "ugly duckling". The main character, a surrogate for the schoolgirl reader, is frequently shy, gauche and clumsy, but sufficiently special enough all the same to attract a man around whose arrival "hi-jinks ensue".

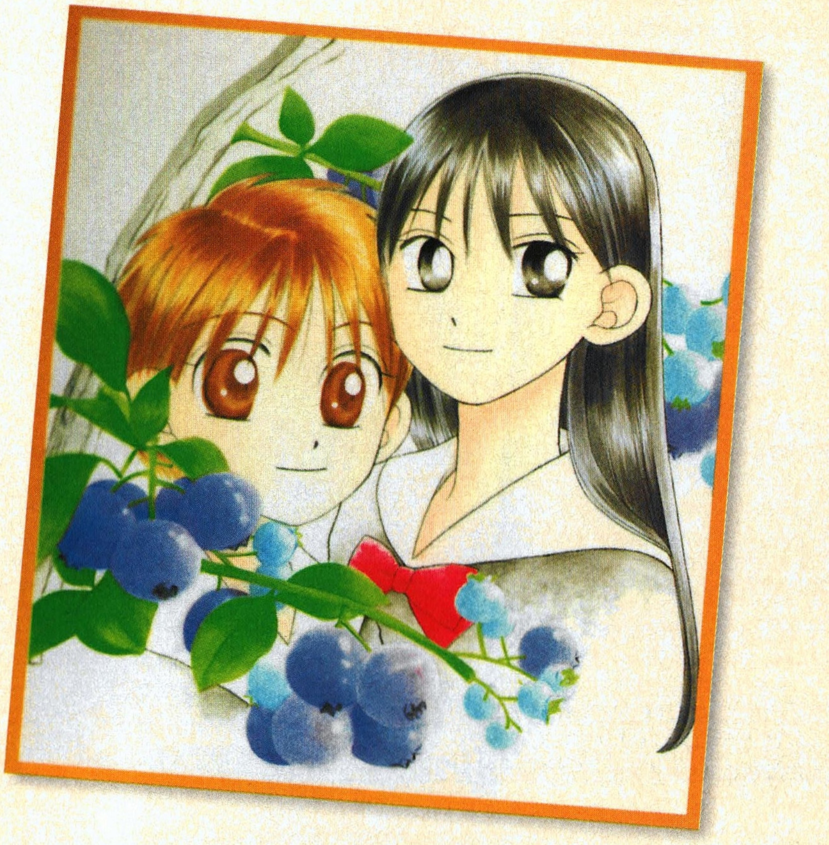
To Masami Tsuda's credit her manga *His Secret, Her Secret* throws away the rule-book. The school setting is the same, but the characters have changed. At her school the heroine, Yukino Miyazawa, is a perfect straight-A student: pretty, intelligent and the darling of her junior high. But to her family at home she is a vain, lazy slob. Yukino expects to be the top student at her new school, but discovers that a boy, Soichiro Arima, has beaten her to it. He is also a perfect student, the adopted son of a wealthy family, and like her he hides a completely different persona. For deposing her from the head of the class, Yukino swears revenge on Arima and plots his downfall, only to find herself falling in love with him.

Yukino and Arima are thrown together when they are appointed as class representatives; after that things quickly go pear-shaped. Yukino is horrified when Arima discovers that she is not all she seems, and allows herself to be manipulated by him into doing his schoolwork. But this is a test of her will, and when she rebels Arima confesses his own dark secret: that his biological mother and father were criminal and irresponsible, and that his desire to be a good student is driven by his desperate need to vindicate his parents. Their masks stripped away, Yukino and Arima form a friendship which develops into a romance.

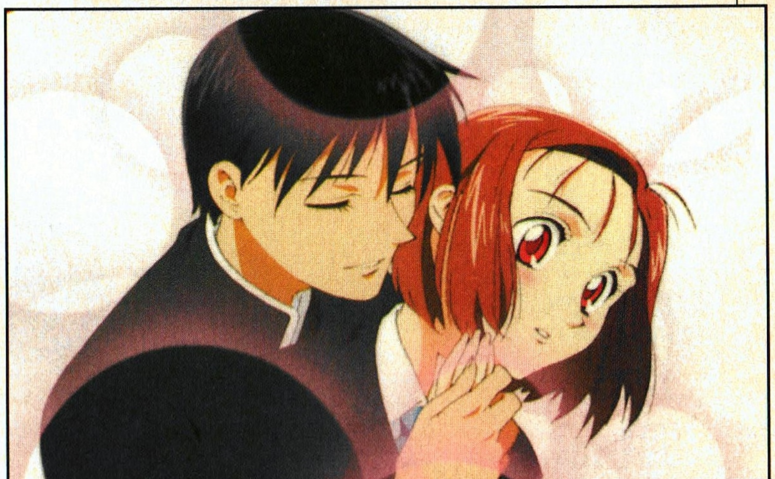


At first glance Yukino is an unsympathetic lead. She is almost too perfect: a beautiful girl; smart; good at sports; good natured; adored by her schoolmates and far too good to be a point of identification for the insecure, self-obsessed schoolgirl readership. In this, Yukino resembles the lead character in Yumiko Suzuki's 1980s manga *I'm Reiko Shiratori*, about a swan-like beauty whose queenly airs and rich-bitch, materialistic attitude are often cut down to size by her complete innocence about relationships. That artless and guileless way with men was key to the character's schoolgirl appeal; readers could feel superior to Shiratori while at the same time identifying

mimi
KC
私の男に手を出すな!!
鈴木由美子
1
白鳥麗子でございます!



On these pages: His Secret, Her Secret, the anime & manga. Left: I'm Reiko Shiratori, Volume 1.



with someone who was as naive about boy-girl relations as they. There are resonances here with the Yukino character, who is equally flawed.

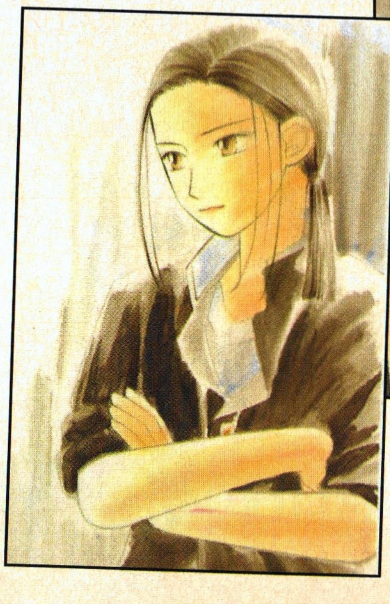
But girls' comics are a reflection of their time and often contain elements of benign satire. In the late 1980s of *I'm Reiko Shiratori* , Japan was in the midst of the bubble economy and consumerism was at its height. You could see many mini-Shiratoris stalking the streets. By contrast, *His Secret, Her Secret* is a product of the 1990s and reflects a profoundly altered society.

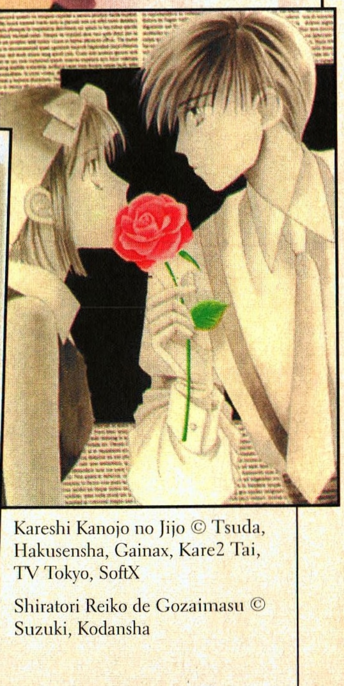
Yukino may be seem perfect at first, but eventually her mask slips and we become aware of the faults and the insecurities that drive her. She is, in part, a reflection of post-boom Japan; a climate in which people are being sacked from "safe" careers, there are fewer jobs for new graduates, and high school boys and girls say that they don't have any hopes or dreams for the future.

Young people have always believed that nobody understands them, but in modern Japan the erosion of old values and institutions has made this worse. With an uncertain future ahead of them, high school kids feel more alienated; their relationships, even amongst their peer group, more fragmented and superficial. Yukino and Arima are poster children for a new generation of Japanese who are insecure, lonely and lacking the social tools to build friendships and lasting relationships. They hide behind carefully constructed masks and facades, and for them it takes the appearance of a dramatic love to change them and help them open up their hearts. This is the vital connection with the comic's besotted high-school readership. The appeal of Masami Tsuda's characters lies in their real and relevant vulnerabilities, and the wish fulfilment behind their romance. ●

His Secret, Her Secret is available in Japanese from Hakusensha (Flowers & Dreams Comics). _I'm Reiko Shiratori_ was released on video in 1990, directed by Mitsuru Hongo of _Spirit of Wonder_ fame. Hideaki Anno's anime version of _His Secret, Her Secret_ is currently on Japanese TV.

Editor's note: Tsuda's manga _Kareshi Kanojo no Jijo_ has a title that is very difficult to translate. _His Secret Her Secret_ is just one interpretation; others include _Matters for Girlfriends & Boyfriends_ and _Affairs of the Heart_. Current fashion in Japan is to call it _Karekano_, roughly _His 'n' Hers_. When Gainax tell us their preferred English title, it's likely to be none of the above...





Kareshi Kanojo no Jijo © Tsuda, Hakusensha, Gainax, Kare2 Tai, TV Tokyo, SoftX

Shiratori Reiko de Gozaimasu © Suzuki, Kodansha

Lodoss War © Mizuno/Group SNE/Kadokawa Magius © Fujimi Shobo

TABLE Talk

Role-Playing JAPANESE Style

Before *Lodoss War* the anime there was *Lodoss War* the game. *Paul Mason* investigates a whole new world of Japanese RPGs...

"Role-playing? Oh yeah! Like *Final Fantasy*, right?" Well, yes and no. Role-playing doesn't have to involve computers. In fact, people have been playing without computers longer than they've been playing with them. Computer games provide nifty graphics, sound effects and entertainment, but can't bring direct human interaction, full rein for your imagination, or the control over your character you can enjoy in a 'real' role-playing game. It's always difficult to explain these games to the uninitiated. By far the easiest is to demonstrate: sit the person down and say 'You are a Japanese high school girl, on a visit with your three friends to the top of the TV tower in Tokyo, when suddenly a flying carpet appears out of nowhere in front of you. A little man with pointed ears, wear-

Heat River
Sand River
White dragon Mountain
Zaxon
Fire dragon Mountain
Flaim
Blade
Storm and Fire Desert
Alania
Allan
Roid
Valis
Kanon
Moss
Road
Dark Town
Marmo
Island of Lodoss

ing a top hat, is sitting on the carpet and beckons to you. What do you do?' If you answer the question, you're role-playing.

All the other parts of role-playing games, the rules, the dice, the art, are no more than icing on the cake of an imaginative experience, a form of shared storytelling. From its origins in United States in the early 1970s, role-playing has spread throughout the world, never quite managing to break into the acceptable mainstream. And as with everything else, you'll find these games in Japan, with a distinctive Japanese spin.

In fact, while the West has never had a very satisfactory term for non-computer role-playing games, the Japanese were quick to coin the word 'tabletalk'. The original 'tabletalk' game, *Dungeons & Dragons (D&D)*, drifted into Japan from the US during the 1980s. Initially pretty incomprehensible even to native speakers of English, let alone Japanese, it was left to the more understandable later versions to get the ball rolling. Yet once it became evident that this peculiarly shaped ball was going to roll all the way, the translations started arriving, and shortly afterwards *Far Roads to Lord* became the first role-playing game to be created in Japan. More was to follow, especially when Japanese fans realised that the West was simply not going to supply everything they wanted.

The breakthrough was *Sword World*. Not in terms of its content, since *Sword World* is the sort of game that experienced role-players would describe, if they bother to mention it at all, as "bog-standard". It features bog-standard rules derived loosely from *D&D*. It features a bog-standard fantasy world straight out of that netherworld of the bookshop where they put *DragonLance*. No, the breakthrough was in the format. *Sword World*, instead of coming in a box, or a large-format "mook", was published as a small book. This meant that it started appearing in ordinary bookshops, rather than just the specialist games shops. *Sword World* took off, and with it, Japanese role-playing. It's no coincidence that although *D&D* was released in a box matching that of its English-language counterpart, it was soon followed by a small paperback version. Here another distinctively Japanese twist also became evident: manga!

> **"...the rules, the dice, the art, are no more than icing on the cake of an imaginative experience,"**

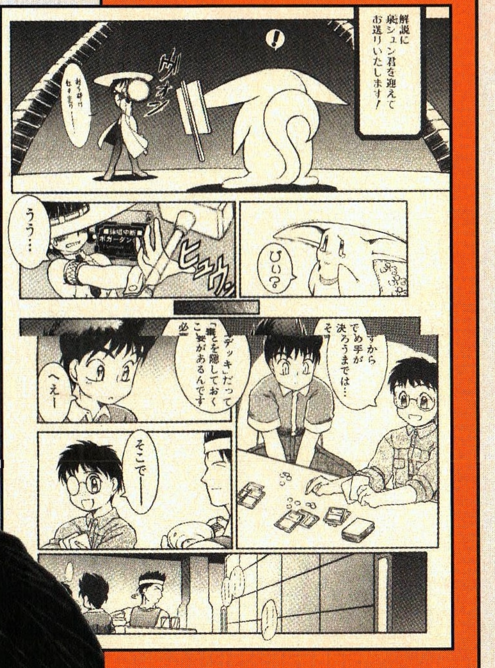
Translation is about more than just words, as the publishers of *D&D* quickly discovered. So the game's visual look was also adjusted to suit the expectations of a manga-reading audience. The Japanese edition of *D&D* is a far cry from its US predecessor, and is an apt demonstration of the differences in popular art styles between the cultures.

Once *Far Roads to Lord* and *Sword World* had demonstrated that Japan didn't have to depend on translations of US product, the floodgates opened. A slew of fantasy games emerged, one of which was the famous *Record of Lodoss War*.

Lodoss was the creation of Ryo Mizuno, who first began it while he was in high school. What started out as little more than a series of day-dream doodles quickly became a high-fantasy setting in the best tradition of Tolkien; a mythical island kingdom, riven by ancient magical war and home to brave fighters, beautiful elves, doughty dwarves and every stock *D&D* character class.

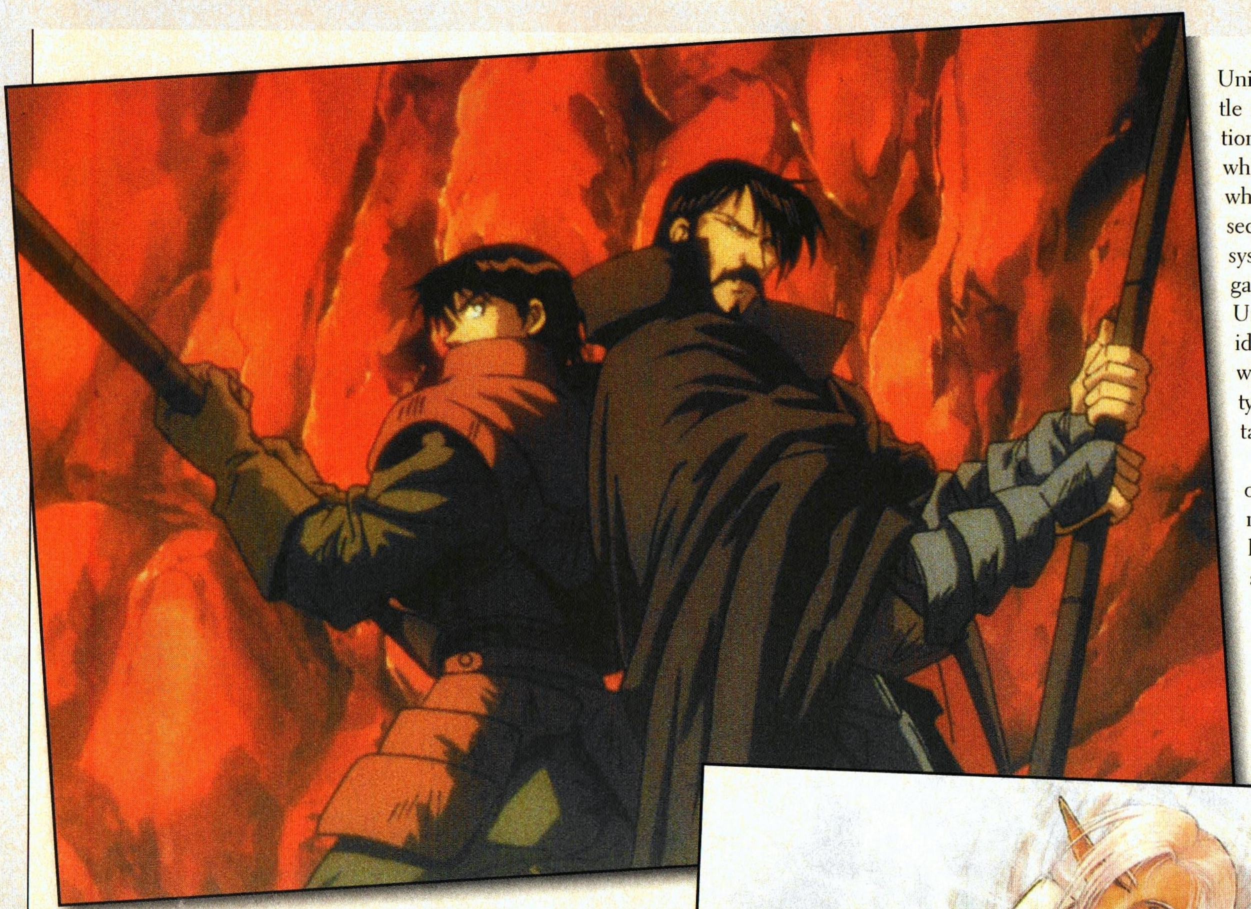
REPLAYS BELIEVE IT OR NOT

One of the most distinctive features of Japanese role-playing, other than the close interaction with the worlds of manga and anime, is the use of 'Replays'. A replay is a blow-by-blow account of a gaming session. So it's a story, in a way, but since it also shows what players said and did, it explains how to play the games. Replays are often in manga form to make their message clear and more accessible. Beyond these, however, there is a whole industry of replays in prose form, including three whole books of *Lodoss War* game write-ups. Don't confuse these replays with game-related novels: there are plenty of those as well: shelves of *Lodoss War*, *Sword World* and *GURPS Runal* novels. Glancing over these shelves, you start to understand a little better how *Lodoss War* broke out of the gaming ghetto the way it did, even without the level of marketing muscle that enabled the TSR's *D&D* books to become best-sellers in the West.


解説に
梟シュン君を迎えて
お送りいたします！
!
ゴオッ
ぴぃ？
ヒュウ
ボガーダン
うう…
ですから
手が
決まるまでは…
「デッキ」だって
手を隠しておく
必要があるんです
へぇー
そこで——

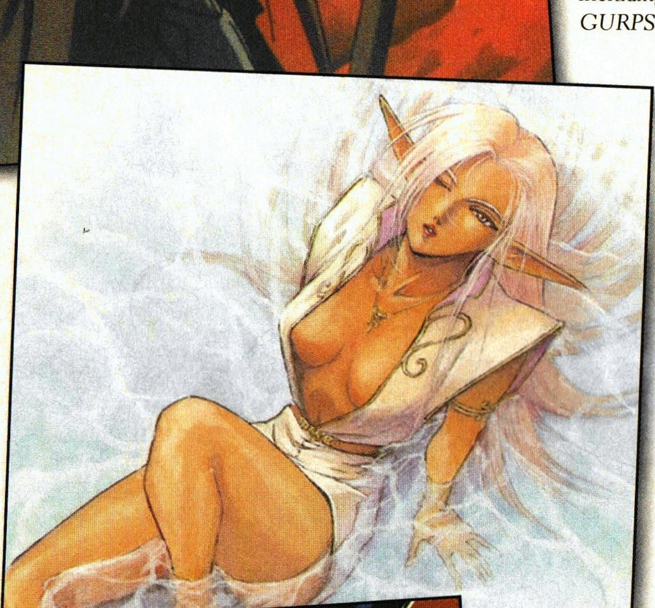
Lodoss War © Mizuno/Group SNE/ Kadokawa

Duel Fighter © Nakamura/Hobby Japan



Lodoss might have stayed within the bounds of Mizuno's skull had he not joined a gaming club called group SNE. They played computer games, poured their money into pachinko machines, and when Mizuno presented *Lodoss* to his fellow gamers as a role-playing campaign, they were so impressed that they set about designing a system of rules that used the story to its best advantage. *Lodoss* the role-playing game was born!

> **"Unfortunately, looking at the way the market for standard tabletalk games has shrunk over the last five or so years, I don't see a very rosy future."**



Mizuno's world found a larger audience when he wrote it up as an article for a gaming magazine. It was so well-received by the readers that it was eventually made available commercially. From then on, it grew in stature until it spawned a 13-part video series at the end of 1989. By this time Kadokawa, the publishers of *Newtype*, had published some of Mizuno's stories as novels, and also begun work on a computer game, a manga series and the inevitable wave of merchandise. Ryo Mizuno's pocket universe was being enjoyed all over the world; not bad for a story that began life in the margins of an exercise book.

Lodoss War © Mizuno/
Group SNE/Kadokawa

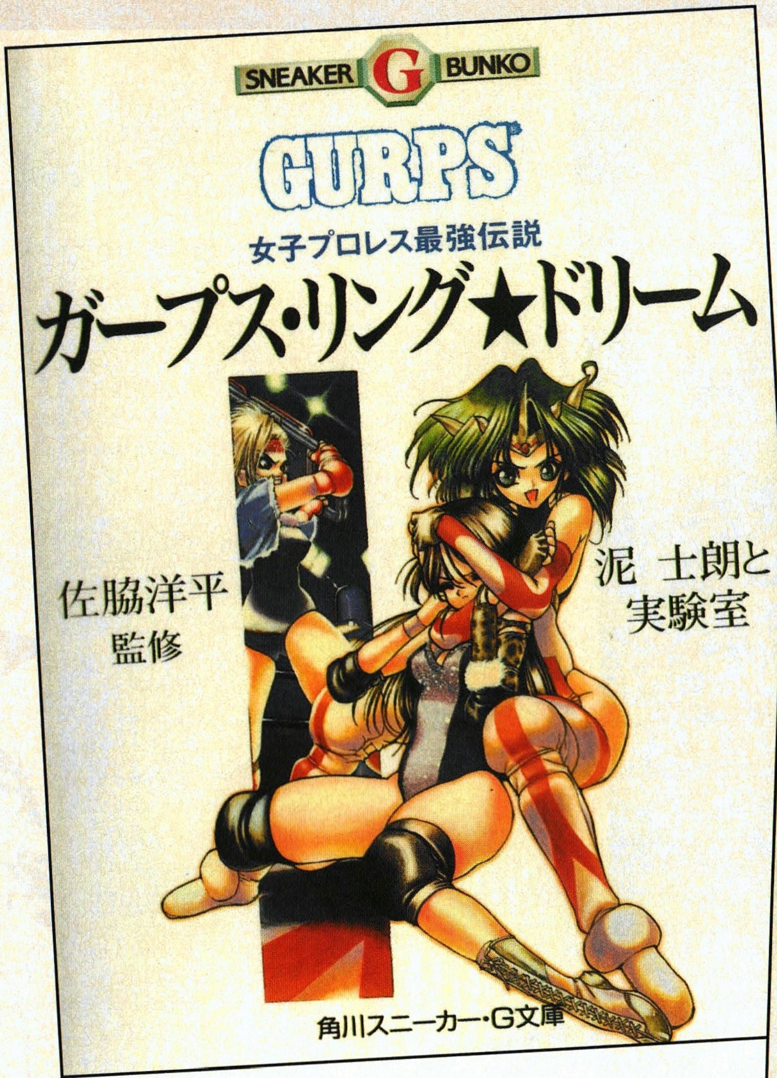
But the traffic wasn't all one way. *Evangelion* is just one of many successful anime which have been given the tabletalk treatment. Because of its towering status, *Eva* has spawned not one, but two role-playing spin-offs. One uses cards (see page 32), the other, a more traditional role-playing game, comes in a small book-format and uses the MAGIUS system. It's the only one. Flying under the MAGIUS flag you'll also find *Tenchi Muyo*, *Silent Möbius*, *Slayers* and *Nadeshiko*.

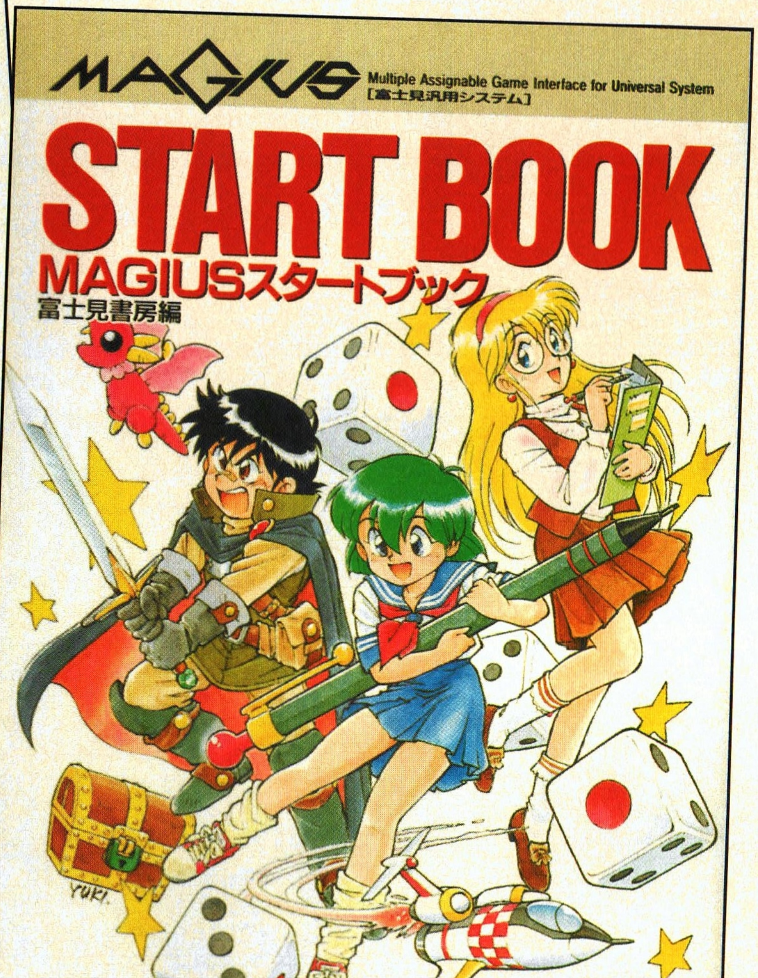
MAGIUS stands for 'Multiple Assignable Game Interface for Universal System', which means very little until you know of its foreign inspiration. Of all the translated games, the one which was most successful in Japan, and which had the biggest influence on subsequent development, was GURPS, the system published by Steve Jackson games. GURPS stands for 'Generic Universal Role-Playing System', the idea being that it's a single set of rules which can be used to run games for any type of background or story, from fantasy to cyberpunk.

Steve Jackson was a bit more generous in his licensing than most Western moguls, which perhaps explains why his game is one of the few that you'll still find on the shelves in Japan. Not only were English-language GURPS products translated, but numerous Japan-sourced books were produced, including would-be Lodoss Wars like *GURPS Runal* (the subtitle: 'A Guide to the World under the Seven Moons' makes it clear that they meant 'Lunar' but got a bit confused with the spelling). For many manga fans, one of the more fascinating of these books is *GURPS Ring*Dream*, a mind-bendingly incomprehensible game about female professional wrestling.

GURPS inspired many Japanese writers to try producing 'generic' systems, including one called WARPS (Wild Adventure Roleplaying System), but the most successful, on account of its tie-ups with lucrative manga licenses, has to be MAGIUS. It probably helps that the rules are dead simple, especially given that GURPS is a bit on the intricate side.

Nowadays, then, you're likely to find most of the remaining diehard tabletalkers using GURPS, MAGIUS or the venerable *Sword World* (*Lodoss War* was, to be honest, more successful as an anime than it was as a role-playing game). Many non-diehards have switched online, whether to polished multi-user products like *Diablo* or more homegrown efforts like *Steel Rainbow*, a game of giant robot 'jaegers' set in 1930s Europe. Others have been eaten up by the great rush to cards. *Magic: The Gathering* has gathered many in this country who enjoyed the 'game' part more than the 'role-playing', and *RPG Magazine*, the country's leading journal, is now full of official *Magic* tournaments. This is why the non-MAGIUS *Evangelion* game uses cards. As I'm sure you can imagine, there have been plenty of Japanese competitors to Magic, with giant robots aplenty, and I'll nail my colours to the mast by stating that by far my favourite is the robot-free *Legends of Yokai*, by Shigeru Mizuki, creator of *Spooky Kitaro*.


SNEAKER G BUNKO
GURPS
女子プロレス最強伝説
ガープス・リング★ドリーム
佐脇洋平
監修
泥 士朗と
実験室
角川スニーカー・G文庫

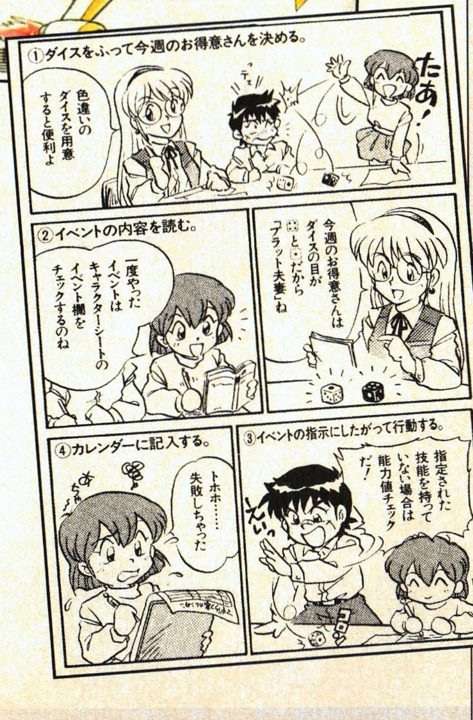

MAGIUS
Multiple Assignable Game Interface for Universal System
［富士見汎用システム］
START BOOK
MAGIUSスタートブック
富士見書房編
YUKI.

Unfortunately, looking at the way the market for standard tabletalk games has shrunk over the last five or so years, I don't see a very rosy future. Groups will continue, of course. There will be fans among the fans who keep the flame burning. But there will be no more *Record of Lodoss Wars* to leap out from the niche and startle a waiting world. It's a shame, because the Japanese zest for gaming, copious use of manga art in rulebooks, and disdain for overly complex rules has something to offer the West. I'm particularly fond of several out-of-the-ordinary games which will never be translated: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, a historical game based in 3rd century China, *Daikatsugeki*, which allows role-players to enter the world of the innumerable swordplay dramas, fighting for justice and honour in old Japan, and *Chinese Immortals*, a sort of manga version of all those wild Hong Kong movies about flying swordsmen.

Over in the US, manga is starting to flex its muscles in the role-playing world with the release of *Usagi Yojimbo* (admittedly based on a US pseudomanga) and the generic anime game *Big Eyes, Small Mouth*. Unfortunately in the US, too, tabletalk role-playing's popularity is sliding, and even manga may not be up to the task of rescuing it. Even if tabletalk role-playing does go the way of pigeon-fancying, however, it will at least have left *Record of Lodoss War* as a record of its passing. ●

Additional reporting by Peter J Evans

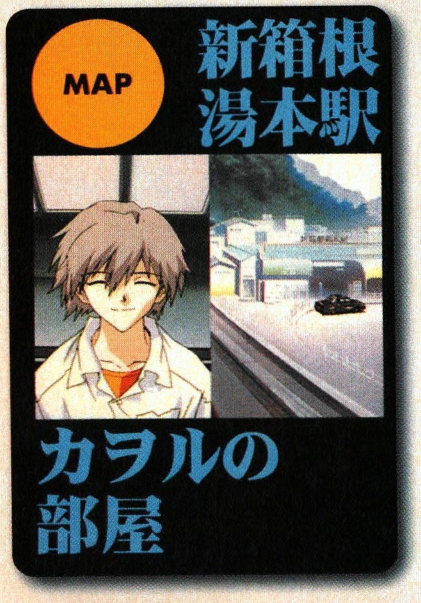
NEON GENESIS
EVANGELION
THE CARD GAME
SYSTEMA
SEPHIROTIC
PUT (Other)
±0
ひぃぃぃぃいやあああ

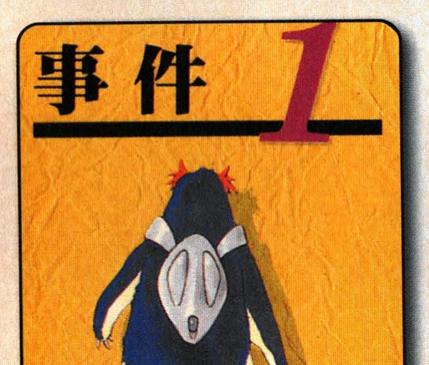

①ダイスをふって今週のお得意さんを決める。
たあ！
色違いのダイスを用意すると便利よ
②イベントの内容を読む。
今週のお得意さんはダイスの目が⚃と⚀…だから「フラット夫妻」ね
一度やったイベントはキャラクターシートのイベント欄をチェックするのね
③イベントの指示にしたがって行動する。
指定された技能を持っていない場合は能力値チェックだ！
④カレンダーに記入する。
トホホ……失敗しちゃった

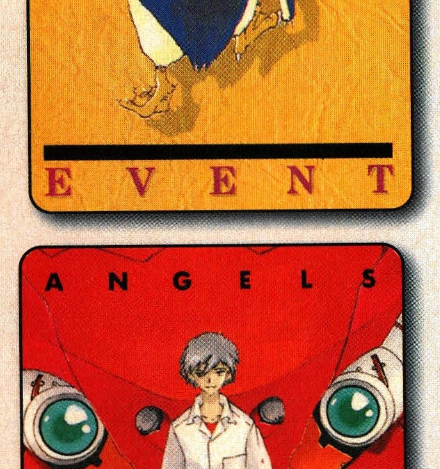
GURPS Ring *Dream © Kadokawa
Sneakers Bunko MAGIUS © Fujimi Shobo
Evangelion © Gainax/Project Eva/TV Tokyo

Clockwise from right: Instruction manual manga style; Play your cards right in the Eva game; two fighting tableaux from Lodoss; Gurps Ring* Dream; & the Magius rule book.

Angel Attack!


MAP
新箱根
湯本駅
カヲルの
部屋

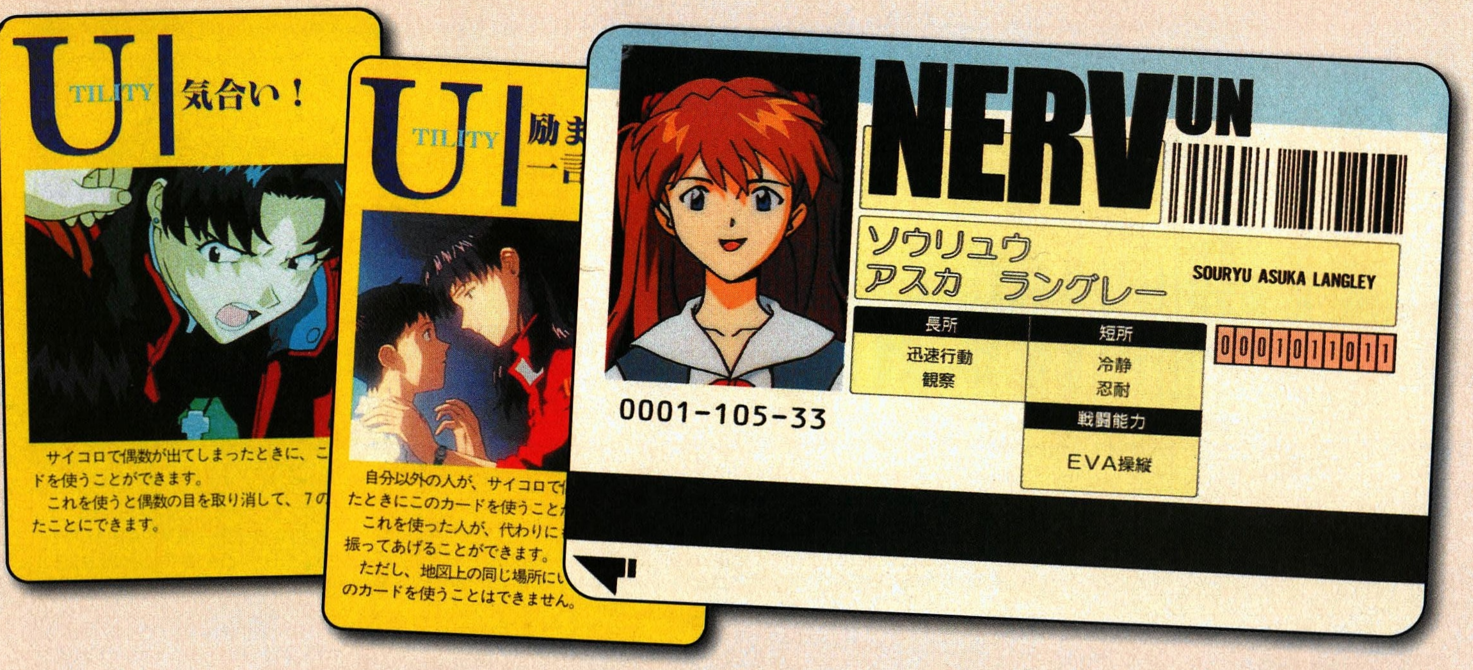



ANGELS
TABLIS

新世紀エヴァンゲリオン
コンプ
コレクション
スペシャル
Comp Collection Special
Neon Genesis
EVANGELION-RPG
The Descent of ANGEL
使徒降臨
RPG
Descent
OF
The
ANGEL
原作 GAINAX
著 中澤光博（ORG）
角川書店

Evangelion: Descent of the Angels © Gainax/Project Eva/TV Tokyo

You just drew Broken Umbilical, but are inspired by a Misato Pep Talk. That gives you 200 seconds to defeat the Angel before your Stress Points go critical and your Eva shuts down... *Julia Sertori's* been playing the **Evangelion** role-playing game...


U TILITY 気合い！
サイコロで偶数が出てしまったときに、こ
ドを使うことができます。
これを使うと偶数の目を取り消して、7の
たことにできます。
U TILITY 励ま
一言
自分以外の人が、サイコロで
たときにこのカードを使うこと
これを使った人が、代わりに
振ってあげることができます。
ただし、地図上の同じ場所にい
のカードを使うことはできません。
NERV UN
ソウリュウ
アスカ　ラングレー
SOURYU ASUKA LANGLEY
長所
迅速行動
観察
短所
冷静
忍耐
戦闘能力
EVA操縦
0001-105-33
0001011011

"Captain Katsuragi! They're attacking the school!"

"Get 'em, Shinji."

"Bog off! My Stress Level's too high and I've gone AWOL!"

Shinji's sulking somewhere in the bath. Rei's too injured to stand and Asuka's synchro-ratio is too low! You're defending Planet Earth from terrifying invaders, and all you've got is a gang of miserable children to pilot your interceptors. Currently only available in Japanese, Hiroshi Nakazawa's table-talk *Evangelion* game is a fun-packed recreation of the TV series for all those armchair pilots who think they can do better.

Each participant chooses a member of the cast and receives their NERV identification card, complete with strengths, weaknesses and secret motivations. A full session lasts for 18 game days, with random events interfering with the character's attempts to get on with their lives. Although some scenarios have a predetermined set of events based on the original TV series, the most fun can be had from the random generators. Easiest time of it comes when you draw the 'Perfect Day' card, leaving your characters with nothing to do except lick their wounds, sunbathe or, if you're Asuka, complain about having nothing to do. But even a non-event comes laden with tension. Can Ritsuko get Eva #2 repaired in time? Will Shinji have a stress meltdown? Will Misato take it *too* easy and find herself co-ordinating the next battle with a hangover?

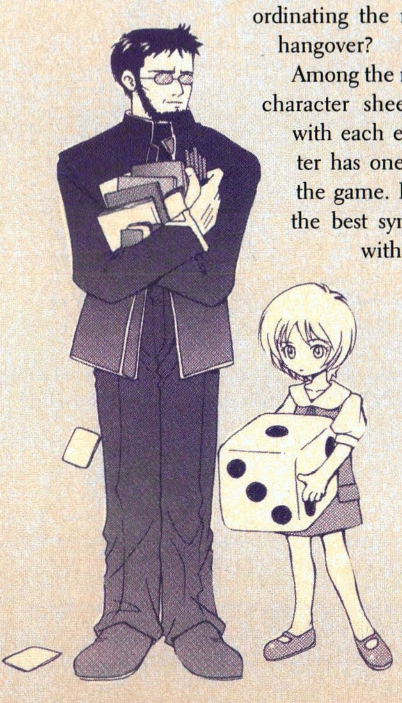
Among the many scores on the character sheets, that fluctuate with each event, each character has one particular aim in the game. It could be getting the best synchronisation ratio with an Eva, keeping one's stress at manageable levels, or keeping three Evas operational for a set period. Just as in a 'real' role-playing game, managing these motivations properly provides the kernel of the playing experience, since some of them are mutually contradictory. If the management push the pilots too hard, they'll have a revolt on their hands, but if the pilots spend too much time feeling miserable, they might not be ready next time the Angels start drilling through the roof. And, sure, you might want to save your sister's school from an attack, but what if that leaves you too damaged to hold off an assault on Terminal Dogma the next day?

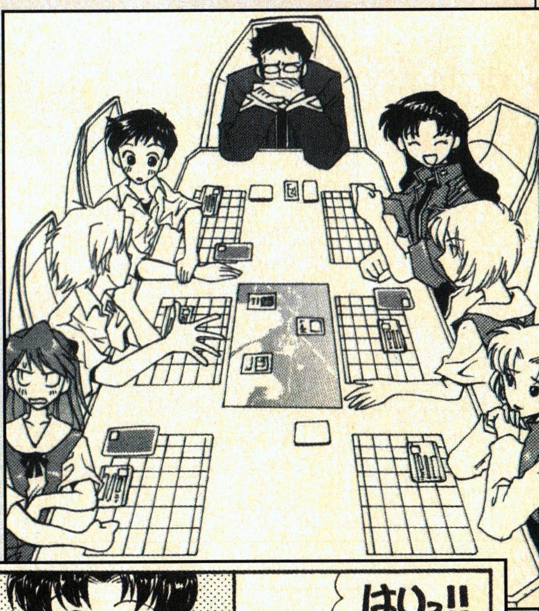
The *Evangelion* RPG is a strange hybrid of gaming systems. Although it has the outward appearance of a card game, the cards are merely a cut-up version of a standard gaming manual. The Event cards are only numbers, referring to scenarios in the book, like a randomly-determined Fighting Fantasy Gamebook. This means that the players can write their own scenarios without having to buy booster packs, and also makes it easier for the manufacturer to provide their own supplements, without the added expense of printing new cards.

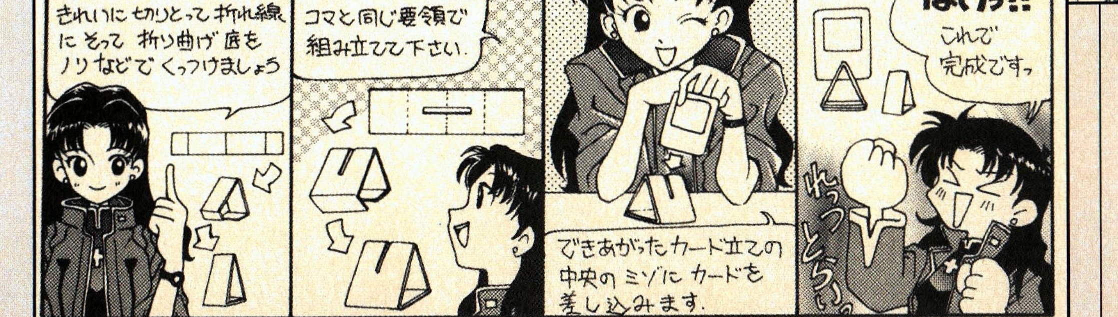
Like many role-playing games designed to cash-in on a particular series, continuity demands make it difficult to do anything too radical. A blank card is provided for those who want to invent their own pilots, but the character interactions have been carefully balanced, and the addition of a 'wild card' might be fun in the short term, but may eventually upset the playability. But the *Evangelion* RPG was never designed to be a long-running campaign, just the chance to relive the experience for a few hours, and ponder what might have been.●

Evangelion RPG: Descent of the Angels Published in Japanese by Kadokawa. ISBN 4-04-714516-5, ¥1400.

Evangelion: Descent of the Angels © Gainax/Project Eva/TV Tokyo



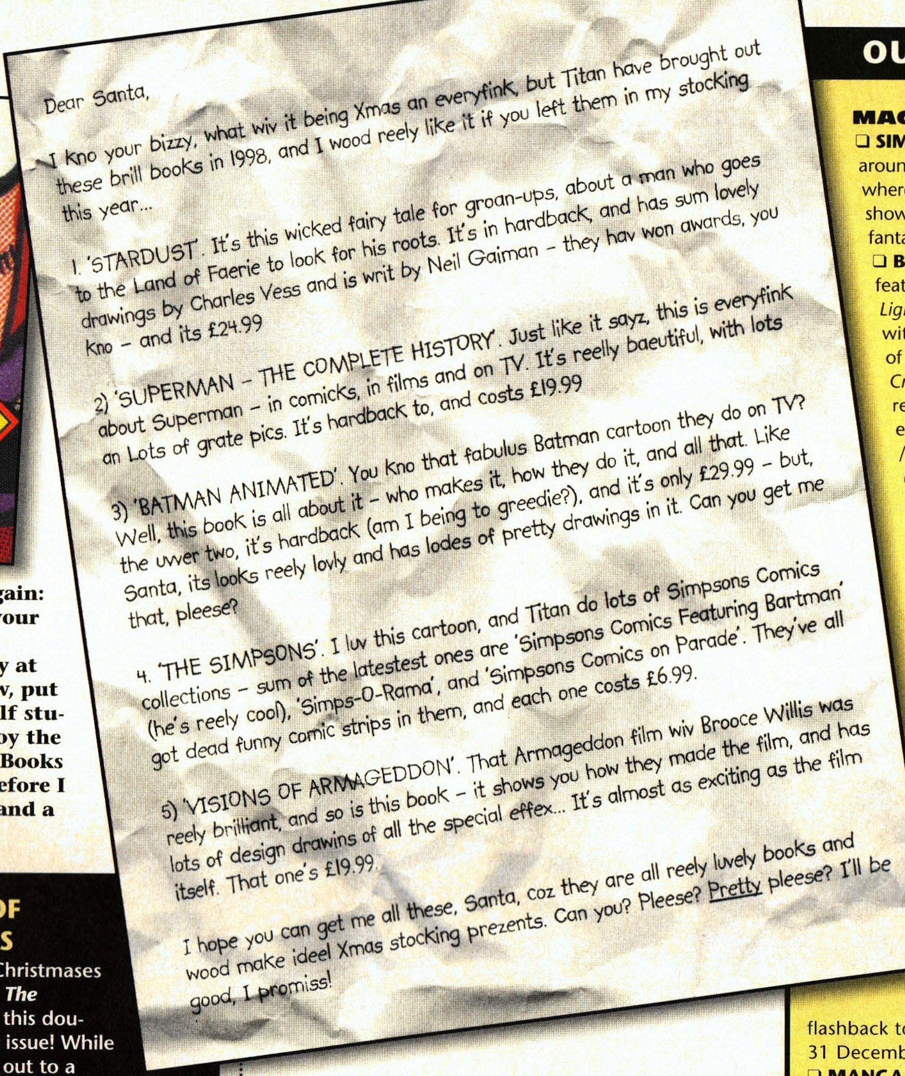



まずは コマを 組み立てます きれいに 切りとって 折れ線に そって 折り曲げ 底を ノリなどで くっつけましょう
次はカード立てです コマと同じ要領で 組み立てて下さい.
できあがったカード立ての 中央の ミゾに カードを 差し込みます.
はいっ!! これで 完成ですっ
れっつとらいっ

THIS IS AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR TITAN BOOKS LTD.

TITAN TALKS December 1998

SUPERMAN
THE COMPLETE HISTORY
TO CELEBRATE SIXTY YEARS OF THE MAN OF STEEL
Les Daniels
TITAN BOOKS



Dear Santa,

I kno your bizzy, what wiv it being Xmas an everyfink, but Titan have brought out these brill books in 1998, and I wood reely like it if you left them in my stocking this year...

1. 'STARDUST'. It's this wicked fairy tale for groan-ups, about a man who goes to the Land of Faerie to look for his roots. It's in hardback, and has sum lovely drawings by Charles Vess and is writ by Neil Gaiman – they hav won awards, you kno – and its £24.99

2) 'SUPERMAN – THE COMPLETE HISTORY'. Just like it sayz, this is everyfink about Superman – in comicks, in films and on TV. It's reelly baeutiful, with lots an Lots of grate pics. It's hardback to, and costs £19.99

3) 'BATMAN ANIMATED'. You Kno that fabulus Batman cartoon they do on TV? Well, this book is all about it – who makes it, how they do it, and all that. Like the uvver two, it's hardback (am I being to greedie?), and it's only £29.99 – but, Santa, its looks reely lovly and has lodes of pretty drawings in it. Can you get me that, pleese?

4. 'THE SIMPSONS'. I luv this cartoon, and Titan do lots of Simpsons Comics collections – sum of the latestest ones are 'Simpsons Comics Featuring Bartman' (he's reely cool), 'Simps-O-Rama', and 'Simpsons Comics on Parade'. They've all got dead funny comic strips in them, and each one costs £6.99.

5) 'VISIONS OF ARMAGEDDON'. That Armageddon film wiv Brooce Willis was reely brilliant, and so is this book – it shows you how they made the film, and has lots of design drawins of all the special effex... It's almost as exciting as the film itself. That one's £19.99.

I hope you can get me all these, Santa, coz they are all reely luvely books and wood make ideel Xmas stocking prezents. Can you? Pleese? Pretty pleese? I'll be good, I promiss!

It's that time of year again: the tree is decorated, your cards are posted, your stocking's sitting patiently at the foot of your bed... Now, put your feet up, stuff yourself stupid with turkey, and enjoy the latest releases from Titan Books and Magazines. Oh, and before I forget – Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS

A trip back to Christmases past for ***Sabrina, The Teenage Witch*** in this double-sized special issue! While Sabrina heads out to a tropical beach for the holiday (and misses all the snow!), her cat Salem finds himself in human form and falling in love. There's a whole 38 pages of the usual brilliant comic strip (that's nearly twice as much as normal!), along with more profiles of the stars of the television show. Join Sabrina, and celebrate a magical Christmas!

WAITING FOR WARS

As we're about to enter 1999, anyone who is anyone is looking forward to the release of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, the first film of the new trilogy. If the wait is just too much to bear, then ease the pain with ***Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron – The Warrior Princess***. This graphic novel is set after *Return of the Jedi*, and tells of the continuing adventures of Captain Wedge Antilles and his fight against the last remnants of the evil Empire. And if that doesn't calm your anticipation, check out the latest issue of ***Star Wars Magazine***, which features interviews with *The Phantom Menace* stars Ewan McGregor and Terence Stamp, along with a look at the original – and very different – edit of *Star Wars: A New Hope*. Go on, Force yourself...■

DREDD-FUL

In the first all-new *Judge Dredd* collection in nearly five years, the lawman goes up against those naughty aliens from the *Predator* films. Struggling to keep a lid on the veritable powder keg of human emotions that is Mega City One, Dredd finds the fuse lit when the Predators arrive on a hunt... Dredd and his colleagues, of course, are prime prey. Written by the award-winning John Wagner (co-creator of *Judge Dredd*), and with cover art by the hugely talented Brian Bolland, the face-off between Dredd and the aliens is something you can't afford to miss! ■

FIVE ALIVE

As the award-winning fifth season of *The X-Files* airs on BBC1, check out the latest issue of ***The X-Files Monthly*** for a complete armchair guide to this new season. Featuring a huge, 14-page guide to season five, along with an exclusive set visit to the filming of "The End" (the final episode, if you hadn't already guessed), you'll be as wrapped up in this as you will be by the stunning events unfolding on television. As the pace picks up, make sure you're not left behind...■

BOLDLY GO

As the ninth *Star Trek* film hits the cinemas, don't forget to get all the background information with our ***Star Trek: Insurrection Souvenir Magazine***. It features interviews with all the stars (including director Jonathan Frakes), and a complete guide to the making of the film – from the writing through to the stunning special effects. Out next month is the first of three ***Star Trek: Insurrection Poster Magazines***, featuring an enormous poster of Data, along with more behind-the-scenes secrets. Altogether, the *Star Trek: Insurrection* magazines are something no self-respecting Trekker can afford to be without! ■

OUT THIS MONTH...

MAGAZINES

☐ **SIMPSONS COMICS #22** Lots of clowning around this issue: Krusty takes Bart to Paris, where they meet an old enemy; Sideshow Mel shows us his Incredibly Stimulating Life; plus a fantastic free gift! £2.00 / On sale 3 December.

☐ **BABYLON 5 MAGAZINE #7** This issue features a look into the making of *Sleeping in Light*, the final episode of *Babylon 5*, along with an interview with Carrie Dobro, star of the upcoming *The Babylon Project: Crusade* follow-up series. Plus, there's a set report direct from *Objects at Rest*, the final episode of *Babylon 5* to be filmed. £3.25 / Ships 7 December. (*On sale in UK, Eire, USA, Australia and New Zealand.*)

☐ **THE X-FILES MONTHLY #39** £3.25 / On sale 10 December. See feature.

☐ **STAR TREK: INSURRECTION SOUVENIR MAGAZINE** £3.25 / On sale 11 December. See feature.

☐ **SABRINA: THE TEENAGE WITCH COMIC** #4 £1.99 / On sale 17 December. See feature.

☐ **STAR TREK MONTHLY #48** Further *Star Trek: Insurrection* frenzy, as the latest issue brings you interviews with Patrick Stewart (Capt. Jean-Luc Picard), Marina Sirtis (Deanna Troi), and the guest stars of the film. £3.25 / On sale 21 December.

☐ **STAR WARS MAGAZINE #18** £3.25 / On sale 28 December. See feature.

☐ **SIMPSONS COMICS #23** The presidential election campaign hits Springfield, much to the Simpsons' annoyance; plus, a flashback to Homer's childhood. £2.00 / On sale 31 December.

☐ **MANGA MAX #2** As the stunning *Master Keaton* series hits Japanese television, the latest issue takes a look at this new anime phenomenon. Plus *Perfect Blue* ('Hitchcock does anime'), and interviews with the men inside the monster suits in the original *Godzilla* films! £3.25 / Ships 31 December. (*On sale world-wide.*)

BOOKS

☐ **THE BABYLON PROJECT: EARTH COLONIES SOURCE BOOK** More background material for the *Babylon 5* roleplaying game, featuring everything you could want to know about the many Earth colonies – from Tau Ceti to Mars. 128pp / paperback / £9.99 / On sale 12 December.

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA: STRENGTH IN NUMBERS** Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and the rest of the JLA come under threat from the murderous Prometheus. This villain knows all the heroes' weaknesses, and now has everything he needs to kill every one of them! 208pp / paperback / £8.99 / On sale 12 December.

☐ **PREDATOR vs. JUDGE DREDD** 96pp / paperback / £7.99 / On sale 12 December. See feature.

☐ **STAR WARS: X-WING ROGUE SQUADRON – THE WARRIOR PRINCESS** 96pp / paperback / £9.99 / On sale 12 December. See feature.

PRICES AND RELEASE DATES WERE CORRECT AT PRESS TIME, BUT MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

To order any of these titles, ring Santa's little helpers on 01536 763 631, quoting reference TT12/98. Ho, ho, ho!

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SEALED SECTION
DO NOT OPEN IF YOU ARE EASILY OFFENDED

FREE SUPPLEMENT

THE erotic anime MOVIE GUIDE

PORN IN THE USA

Is anime all sex and violence?

RETURN OF THE TENTACLE

Toshio Maeda's Nightmare Campus

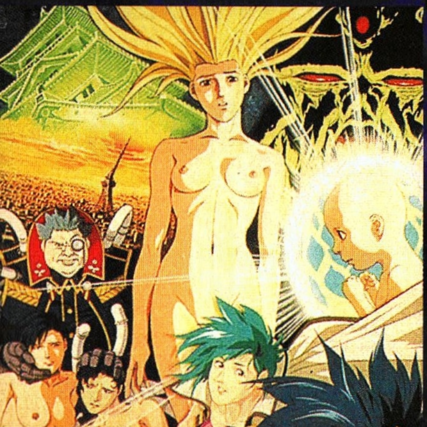
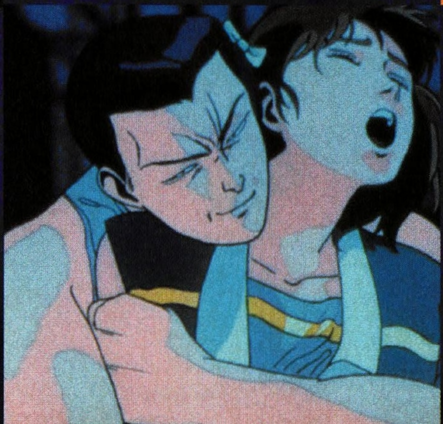
Special **FREE** 16 page Erotic Anime supplement with Manga Max number 1

HARD CORE OTAKU

From Ring Out to Angel Crisis

Porn *in the*

Although mainly banned in Britain, erotic anime are vitally important to the American market. *Fred Patten* asks why.

USA

Since the main United States anime market consists of light entertainment, that is just about all that gets licensed for American release. Most juvenile cartoons and the adult intellectual animation tend to remain on their studios' shelves in Tokyo. As a result, there has been a growing perception in the US that "anime" is synonymous with sex and violence.

Some US companies with Japanese titles in their line-ups are trying to disassociate themselves from the "anime" label. Michael Johnson, president of Buena Vista Home Entertainment, said in *Daily Variety* of Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*, "This is not anime... it's not effects-driven or violence-driven." Mike Lazzo, vice president of programming for the Cartoon Network, assured the public in *USA Today* that anime is not shown on American TV. "Japan animation is so different from what airs here... It's edgier, adult and violent. Anime isn't very story-based... The story is hard to follow." When it was pointed out that the Cartoon Network shows *Speed Racer* and *Voltron*, both juvenile action-adventure TV cartoon series produced in Japan, Lazzo said that "neither show is in the style of anime."

VISIONARY
by U-Jin
Volume 1
WARNING: ABSOLUTELY NOT FOR CHILDREN

AND OVER ONLY
F3
(FRANTIC, FRUSTRATED & FEMALE)
AN ANIMATED FILM THAT BUILDS TO A CLIMAX
English Language Version

Although the more mainstream companies state that they are not interested in video erotica, most of them have at least one adult feature in their catalogues which includes a brief but intense "shocker" scene. For some sensibilities, this is enough to establish the movie as pornography. Several US anime distributors have labels specifically for releases with explicit adult sexual situations.

The best-known title is *Urotsukidoji* (the *Legend of the Overfiend*), the sex-and-tentacles extravaganza dubbed into English by New York-based Central Park Media. According to Valerio Rossi, CPM's marketing/production co-ordinator, it was the realisation that *Urotsukidoji* was too sexually intense to fit into its "boys' adventure" line that led to the creation of the separate Anime 18 label. CPM's Anime 18 releases have been appearing steadily since and the original *Urotsukidoji* film is still popular on the art theatre circuit as a midnight feature.

"It makes it very frustrating to hear someone say, 'Oh, yeah, I know about anime. It's those porno cartoons from Japan."

AD Vision, in Houston, released its first anime video in 1992. For the next two years, it released both regular action-adventure anime and some of the milder erotic comedies such as *F3: Frantic, Frustrated & Female*, often in cut versions. The company's first release under its SoftCel Pictures label, reserved for an emphasis on explicit adult scenes, was *The Legend of Lyon* in 1994. In the next two years, AD Vision released 31 SoftCel Pictures, some of which were previous titles in their unedited form.

Production co-ordinator Janice Williams says that the company has had very few SoftCel releases since June 1996, but that is not because they have not sold well. "They are almost all still in print and selling very consistently. AD Vision made a tremendous investment in mid-1996 to license a great quantity of general anime titles. We are currently working through a big production backlog before we can produce new SoftCel releases. We constantly get e-mail requests from our fans asking when we are going to put out a new SoftCel title. We will definitely resume them soon."

The newest anime specialty distributor, Media Blasters, actually *began* with its adult line, Kitty Media. President John Sirabella says: "I saw there was a large Japanese adult animation source which was still relatively untapped. The potential American market was very good, but the existing anime distributors were nervous about the repercussions of getting into the adult market in a major way. So I started Kitty Media to be the best and biggest company in the adult anime market. Now that we have a solid backlist of over a dozen titles, we are expanding beyond the Kitty Media label. Our first AnimeWorks label release, carrying a "Kid Safe = For Audiences of All Ages!"

Urotsukidoji © Toshio Maeda/Westcape corp/JAVN
Visionary © U-Jin/Shiberu/Knack
F3© Wan Yan A Gu Da/Pink Pineapple
Cream Lemon (Darling Betty) © Fairy Dust/Soeishinsha

ALSO PLAYING

WEATHER REPORT
Girl

The Right Stuf International, in Des Moines, does not consider itself really in the adult market. President Shawne Kleckner says, "Manga Entertainment released an edited version of *Violence Jack* and a lot of fans wanted to see it uncut, so we arranged with ME to release an unedited edition. It was too intense for our regular line, so we created the Critical Mass label. Then in 1997 we had a chance to license a really funny adult comedy, *Weather Report Girl*, and we did not want to pass it up. We do not have any specific plans at present for any more Critical Mass releases, but there will doubtlessly be more when the right titles come along."

***This is an abridged version of an article previously published in* Animation World Magazine. *To read the complete article, please visit the Animation World Network website* (www.awn.com) *at* http://www.awn.com/mag/issue3.4/3.4pages/3.4patten.html**

logo, was Ninku. It has been the success of Kitty Media that is making this growth possible."

AD Vision, CPM and their fellow erotic anime merchants are all happy with the adult market, but they are not as pleased with the public's perception of it. CPM staffers are perturbed by the public's dismissal of all anime as pornography. Valerio Rossi says, "We are disturbed by what seems to be a growing trend to consider anime as nothing but sex and brutal violence. That is a complete distortion of CPM's catalogue. Our Anime 18 titles, as popular as they are, account for only about 10 percent of our anime releases; between 5 percent and 10 percent. Our Anime 18 titles average only eight or nine titles compared to 45 to 50 anime titles a year without sexual content. It makes it very frustrating to hear someone say, 'Oh, yeah, I know about anime. It's those porno cartoons from Japan.'"

"The Anime 18 line is not a porno line as much as a next step in animated storytelling for mature audiences."

Jeff Zitomer, CPM's supervisor of production and marketing, feels that even erotic anime is misrepresented by being equated with pornography. "If you look at actual pornographic videos, you'll see that they have no real story, no characters or character development, no attempt at imaginative camerawork, just close-ups of straight sex. The adult anime market is actually aimed at viewers who want intense adult situations in real stories, whether it's dramatic action or humour. There are 12 videos in the *Urotsukidoji* saga, but it's not just a horror movie with a lot of sex scenes which could be taken out without changing the story. The Anime 18 line is not a porno line as much as a next step in animated storytelling for mature audiences. Our Anime 18 titles are for adults who want even more mature situations and dialogue in their suspense or their comedy, but who definitely want a story and interesting characters rather than just naked bodies engaged in sex."

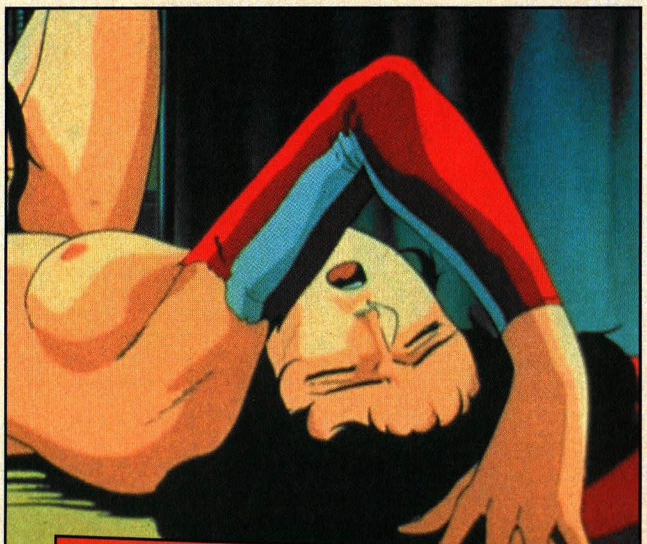
However, the sexual content of the adult anime market is undeniable. This has created some special emphases in acquisitions and marketing. John Sirabella says, "The main problem is that US laws forbid showing children in sexual situations, so all the characters in erotic videos have to look 18 or older. But this is not a restriction in Japan. Also, Japanese women are so small that some may look underage by our standards.

CPM's Jeff Zitomer concurs. Due to the American tendency to assume that cartoons are for kids, the packaging of every Anime 18 video makes it clear that it is for adult viewers only. This is done in a tasteful manner which emphasises the story's dramatic content rather than a sex-appeal hard-sell, but which ensures that a parent or a video-shop clerk could mistake it as suitable for children or young teens. Also, due to recent federal child pornography laws, the packaging and a special video header at the beginning of the tape states clearly that the entire cast is 19 years old or older.

The general American adult TV/video market remains largely untapped. CPM's Joe Cirillo says that *Penthouse Comix* has reviewed some of the Anime 18 videos, but that the adult pay-per-view TV channels are mostly disinterested. Sales to the American erotic-shop market have been very small, and the anime distributors have mixed feelings about trying to

Urotsukidoji © Toshio Maeda/Westcape corp/JAVN
Weather Report Girl © OB Planning/Toho
Mad Bull © Koike/Inoue/Shueisha/Pony Canyon

Cream Lemon (Ami) © Fairy Dust/Soeishinsha
Private Psycho Lesson © U-Jin/Shogakukan/Gaga
La Blue Girl © Maeda/Daiei



Cream Lemon © FairyDust/Soeishinsha

Urotsukidoji © Toshio Maeda/Westcape corp/JAVN

Adventure Kid © Maeda/MW Films

Twin Angels © Oji Miyako/Daiei

Venus 5 © Daiei

Visionary © U-Jin/Shiberu/Knack

Wicked City © Japan Home Video

increase them. Sirabella says, "The adult book and video specialty shops have a bad reputation for non-payment. Also, the American erotic video industry is used to price-points of $9.95 or less, which we can't sell at. And the industry is having enough trouble with anime's reputation as nothing but sex & violence for us to risk making it all look even more like pornography through guilt by association by increasing anime's visibility in the sex shops."

But, in a way, video anime began in the sex shops in the first place. The first adult anime to be released in America appeared in adult book shops in the late 1980s. *The Brothers Grime* was a three-video cartoon-pornography series produced by Excalibur Films between 1986-1988, using titles primarily from Japan's *Cream Lemon* series, the most popular erotic anime before *Urotsukidoji*. A secretary at Excalibur says that *The Brothers Grime* is still selling well today, and she has no idea why the company never followed those three videos up with more anime imports.

"the industry is having enough trouble with anime's reputation as nothing but sex & violence for us to risk making it all look even more like pornography through guilt by association by increasing anime's visibility in the sex shops."

None of the anime distributors are willing to discuss sales figures, but John Sirabella estimates that adult anime is about 30-40% of the overall anime market, itself worth $100 million a year. This is disputed by CPM's sales director, Mike Pascuzzi, who estimates that the adult sales only account 15-20%. "Don't forget that there are several other anime distributors such as Viz Video, Pioneer, AnimEigo and Urban Vision which do not have an adult label at all. They may have a few individual titles which require a Mature Audiences warning, but they are not really in the adult market." This may be a difference in perception as to what constitutes the "adult anime market" as opposed to the general market. Would a raunchy adolescent comedy full of frat-boy humour such as pantie raids, peeking into the womens' showers and foul-mouthed dialogue, but no explicit sex, count as an adult or as a general sale?

The immediate concern of the American anime industry is not expanding its adult market share so much as damage control to remind the public that not all anime is pornographic. Ironically, anime enthusiasts (the hard-core fans as well as the manufacturers) have been citing for years the theatrical animation of Hayao Miyazaki as well as popular TV series like *Speed Racer* and *Sailor Moon* as examples of the best in anime, which they have hoped will transcend the "anime cult" reputation and popularise Japanese animation with the general public. But now these titles are being sold by major American animation purveyors who deny that they are anime at all, promoting them as "much better than that notorious Japanese low-quality sex-&-violence." The next couple of years may see which definition of anime will become standardised in the US. ●

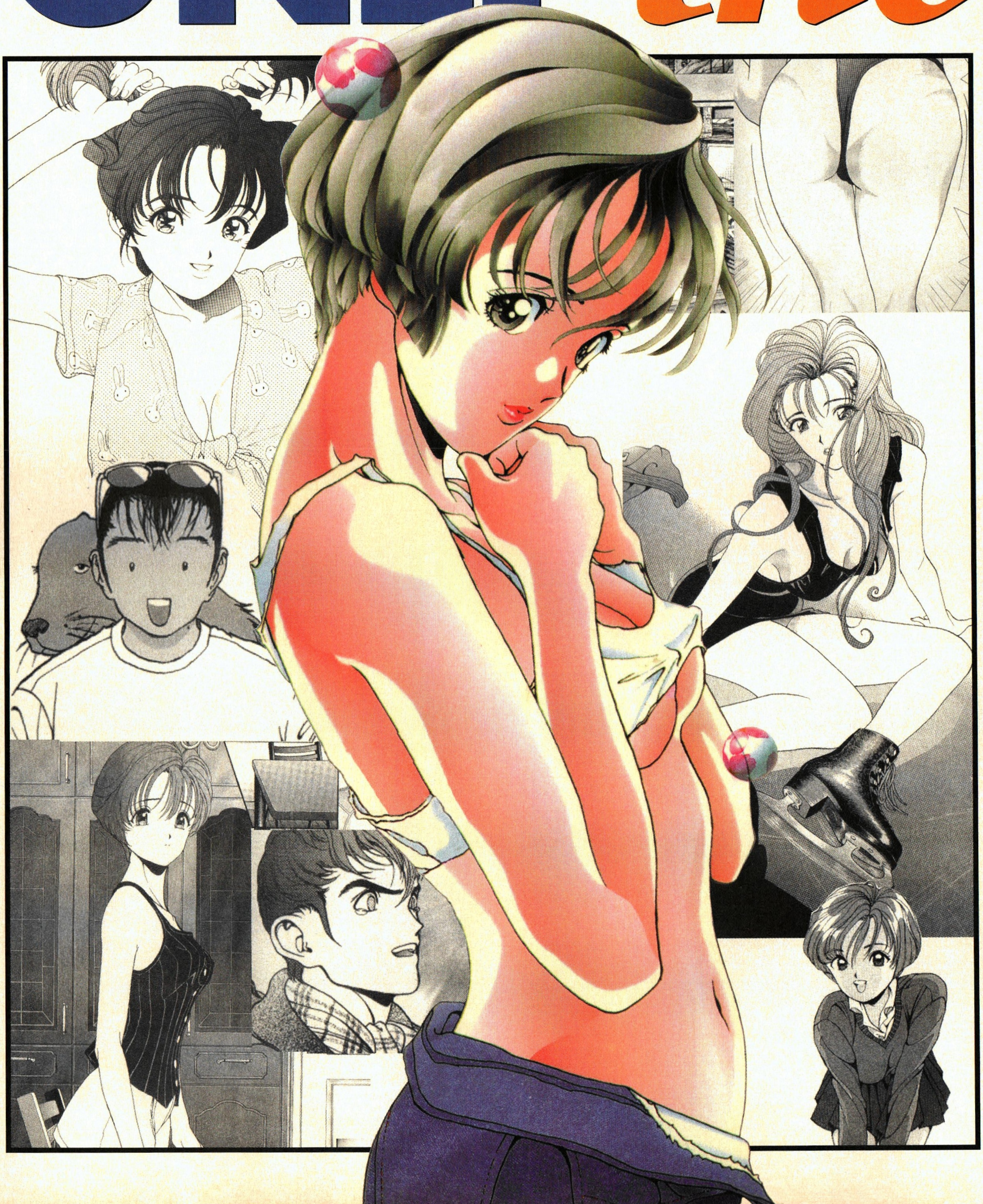
ADVENTURE KID
VOLUME 1
WARNING: ABSOLUTELY NOT FOR CHILDREN

Twin Angels
Volume 1
WARNING: ABSOLUTELY NOT FOR CHILDREN

Venus 5
The Inma Ball
WARNING: ABSOLUTELY NOT FOR CHILDREN

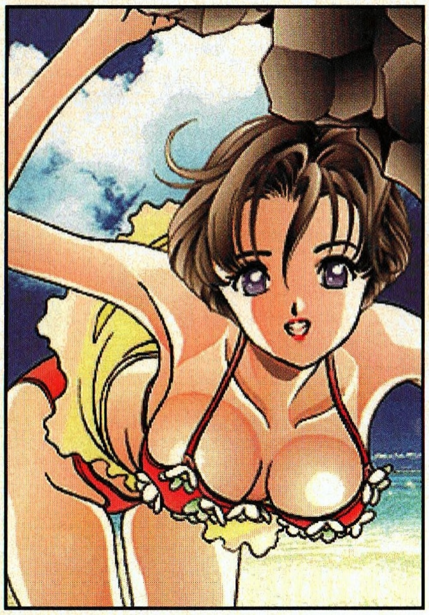
LA BLUE GIRL
1
UNCENSORED
WARNING: ABSOLUTELY NOT FOR CHILDREN

ONLY *the*



LONELY

Julia Sertori *has a crush on U-Jin's* **Cherry Dispatches**



YOUNG SUNDAY COMICS
桜通信
1
RONIN DAIGAKU-JUKEN
SANKOUSHO ITOKO KEIO-SEI
SHIBOUKOU HENSACHI DOUKYO
HATSUTAIKEN SHINKAN-CONPA TONMA
SANKAKUKANKEI JOSHI-KOUSEI
NISE-GAKUSEI ICHOUNAMIKI
YOBIKOU DOUTEI RENAI
遊人

Mieko Yotsuba ("it means Four Leaves, like the clover") has got it all. She's got a beautiful body, long, luscious locks and a place at Tokyo's prestigious Keio University. When Tonma hits town, he's self-confident and full of himself, ready to take his place at Keio and get on with his life, a life that he's sure will involve falling in love with Mieko and settling down in wedded bliss. But Mieko's only interested in college boys, and Tonma's too embarrassed to tell her that he keeps failing the exams. He resorts to gatecrashing university events to keep her from discovering his guilty secret.

U-Jin's *Cherry Dispatches* harks back to those terrible teenage times, when chance accidents of birth meant so much to us all. Thanks to one lousy exam result, Tonma's no longer the social equal of the gorgeous Mieko, but a whole year "younger" than her. He's what the Japanese call a "ronin" —a "masterless samurai" forced to take a year out while waiting for the re-sits. And now he's put back a year, he's in the same class as his cousin Urara, a pure-hearted innocent who worships the ground he walks on.

But is Urara really so naive? This perky schoolgirl is also a demon schemer, moving Tonma into her absent father's flat so she can seduce him. She parades in front of him half-naked, offers to wash his back in the bath, and takes him shopping for condoms. But unlike U-Jin's shorter erotic works, *Cherry Dispatches* is a heartfelt, emotional roller-coaster ride, shocking in the relative lack of gratuitous sex scenes. 15 years of U-Jin's trademark porn has clearly left him hungry for a real story with decent characterisation. The real surprise is that he carries it off so effortlessly. The gusset-and-gumption female ciphers of *Angel* and *Pictures from High School* have been replaced by flesh and blood heroines, easily the match of his male protagonist. And if the exam results are anything to go by, they're all smarter than him, too.

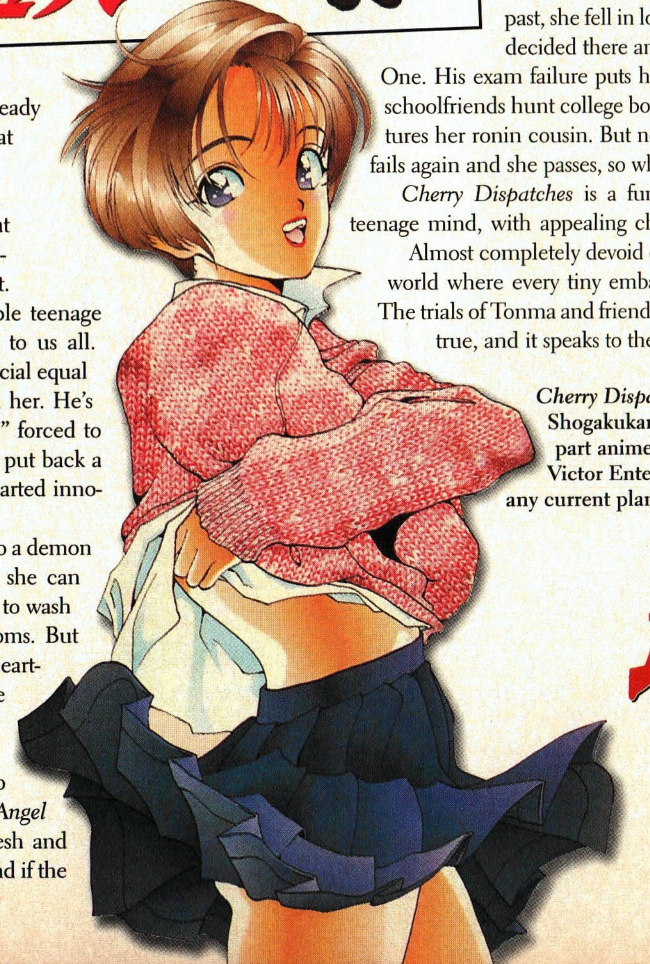
Mieko is a wonderful creation. She's not bad, she's just disinterested, a party-girl with too much on her mind to notice the fawning boy who's fallen for her. U-Jin cleverly employs collages of speech balloons to show her continually interrupting Tonma as he stammers through his juvenile pick-up lines. Far too good for him but far too polite to say so, it takes her several chapters to admit she's got a fiancé. And with the pragmatism of a true Romeo, his pain in the rain is soon washed away by the prospect of a tryst with the newly-appealing Urara. But just as things are looking promising with Urara, there's another about-face.

Mieko's engagement is a sham, a dynastic marriage designed to seal a pact between two rival corporations. And she's looking for a way out. Just when we, and Tonma, were getting used to the idea of doing the deed with Urara, Mieko waltzes back into his life with all the single-minded assurance of a woman on the warpath. Now Tonma's in trouble of epic, Jerry Springer proportions, and if he's not careful, he'll lose them both.

Secret after secret builds up with a true mastery of pacing. In an erotic echo of *Oh My Goddess*, we discover that Urara is no mad stalker. In the distant past, she fell in love with Tonma on a family trip, and decided there and then that he was going to be The One. His exam failure puts her in with a chance, and while her schoolfriends hunt college boys in the streets of Tokyo, Urara nurtures her ronin cousin. But next time the exams come round, he fails again and she passes, so where does that leave them?

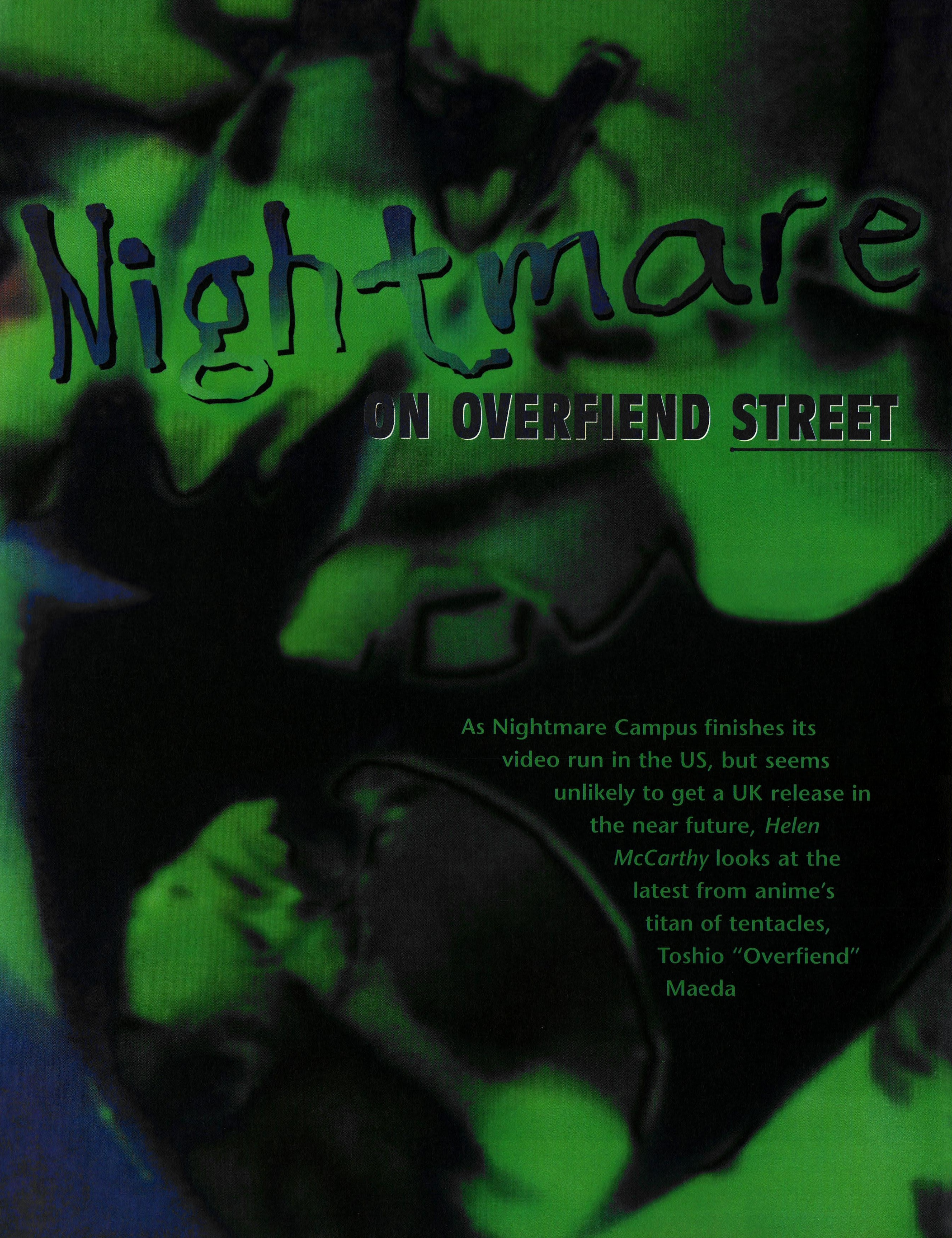
Cherry Dispatches is a funny, heart-rending trip around the teenage mind, with appealing characters that we all can recognise. Almost completely devoid of adults, it's a charming peek into a world where every tiny embarrassment is the end of the world. The trials of Tonma and friends are all so silly, but all so desperately true, and it speaks to the love-lorn in us all. ●

Cherry Dispatches is published in Japanese by Shogakukan's Young Sunday Comics. The six-part anime version was released in 1997 by Victor Entertainment. We are not aware of any current plans to release it in English.



遊人

Sakura Tsushin © U-Jin



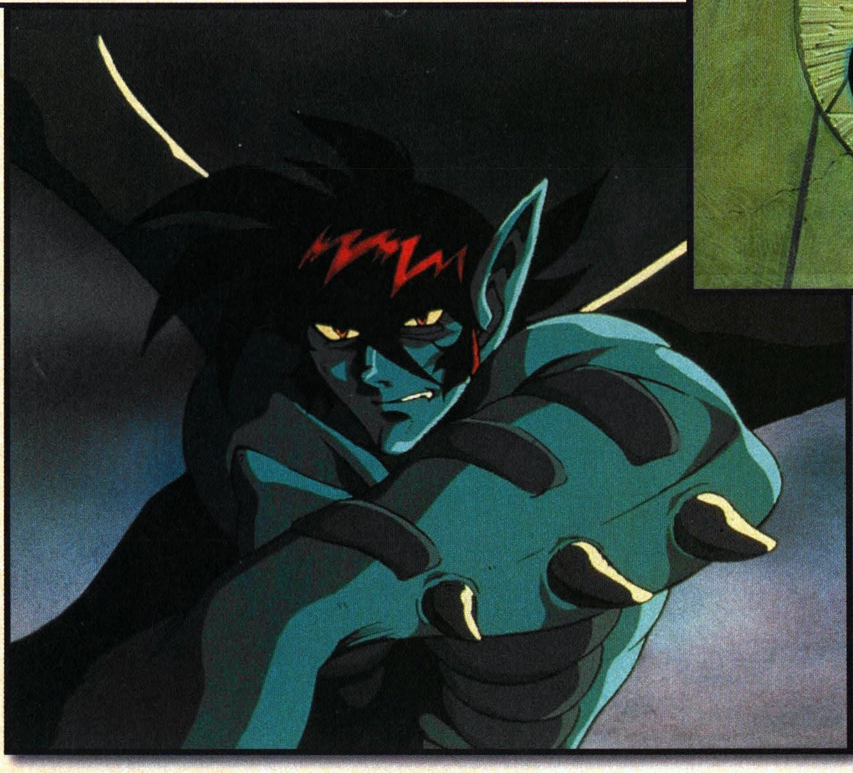
Nightmare ON OVERFIEND STREET

As Nightmare Campus finishes its video run in the US, but seems unlikely to get a UK release in the near future, *Helen McCarthy* looks at the latest from anime's titan of tentacles, Toshio "Overfiend" Maeda

Earlier this year, I wrote a last-minute update on *Nightmare Campus* for *The Erotic Anime Movie Guide*. Like a number of other titles in the book, it had beaten us to Western release by a good margin. It saw the light of day in 1996 as the latest tits 'n' tentacles tale from Toshio Maeda. When we started to compile our film listing last year, it was known to us only in a Cantonese version as *Blackboard Jungle*. The first part had its moments of interest, but nothing to cause us to challenge the view that it was a minor Maeda work, more of the order of *Adventure Kid* (aka *Adventure Duo* in the UK) than the epic *Legend of the Overfiend*.

Diff'rent Strokes

The aspect that reminded me most strongly of *Adventure Kid* (apart from the large amounts of sex, mostly gratuitous and none of it for fun) was the huge variation in style throughout the first episode. Designers Sato and Hayama adopt a mishmash of character styles, from ugly wimp/thug caricatures lifted from gag manga, through seventies-style demonic types popularised by Go Nagai and much imitated, to a cleverly incongruous American-comic cutie whose appearance signals her function, a stereotype blonde who's only there to get laid. She's one of many characters who isn't even accorded the dignity of a name.

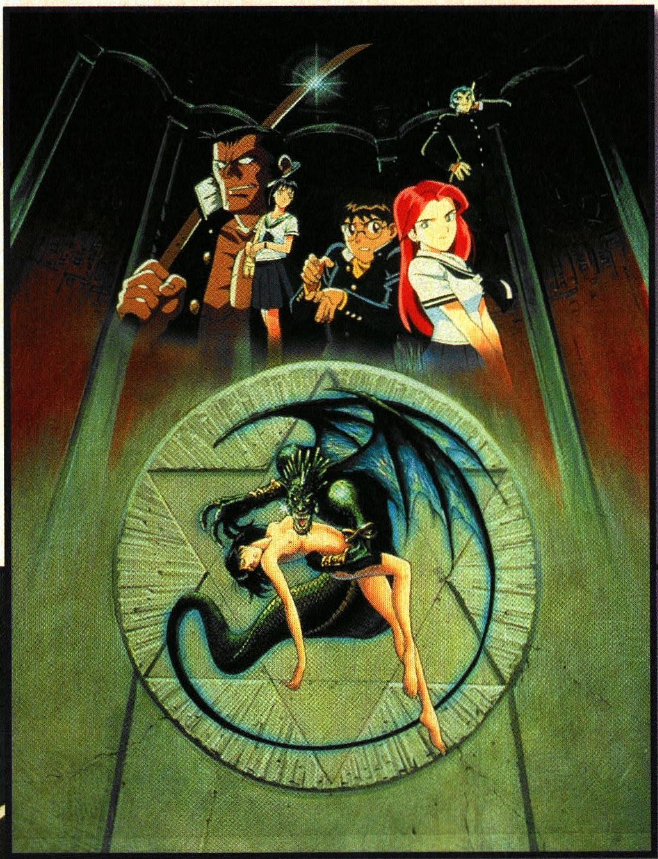


By episode two, the design differences have begun to reveal their true purpose: they are both a device to signal a character's background and allegiances at the start of the story, and a deception to lead the audience to make assumptions about each character's role and function.

In addition, just as *Adventure Kid*'s sexual content switched from seriously nasty to comically crude, so in *Nightmare Campus* the depiction of sexual acts, and in particular of sexual organs, veers from the time-honoured techniques of suggestion – voids, back spaces, shadows on a curtain – to the realistic, stopping at all points in between. This continues throughout all five episodes. The UK is evidently not the only country where confusion reigns in matters of censorship.

Rebirth of the Overfiend

As the story unfolds, we see echoes of the *Overfiend* saga. Young Masao Serra (a retro-styled innocent teen) leaves the safety of Japan with his mother to fly to a remote part of the Himalayas. His father, an archaeologist, has been taken ill while digging in an underground cavern. As they search for him underground a creature springs out of the darkness to rip the young assistant and Masao's mother apart. As it bears down on him he grabs a gun and shoots. It is only then that he realises he has killed his own father. As he reels in shock, the rear wall of the cavern opens and a mysterious priestess appears and slices him open with a sword, telling him that his blood will go to assist the release of the mighty Demon Lord. He's one of the lucky ones; he will die before the coming of Hell on Earth.



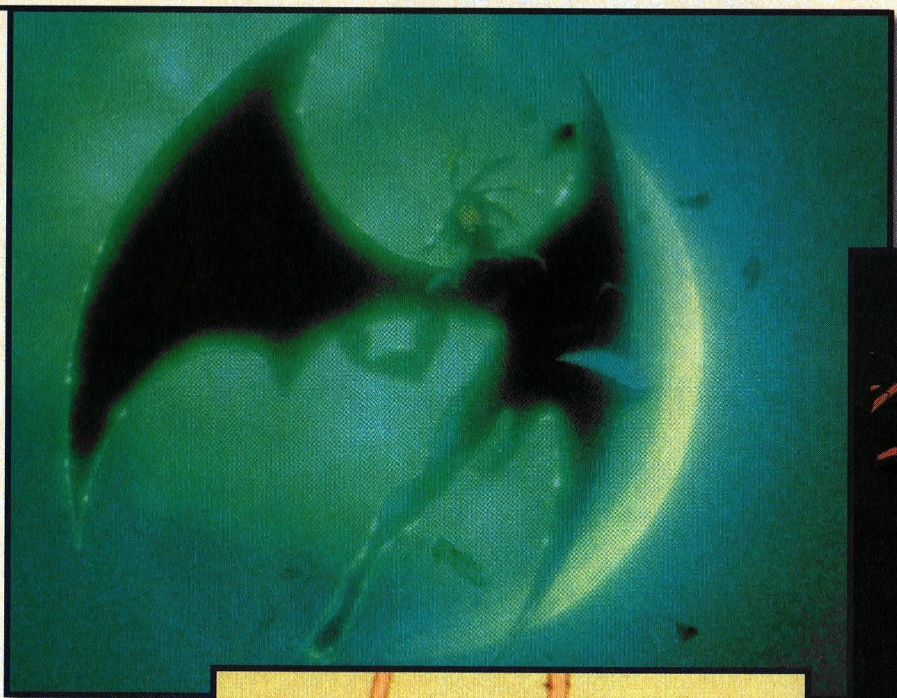
In Masao's old school, his former classmate Yuko (classic Girl Next Door) remembers him with fondness, while his best friend Akira (cool, domineering retro type) wonders if he really is dead. But the school has more immediate concerns. Gangs of thugs slug it out for control of the campus, with the school authorities seemingly powerless to stop the rot. Some of the pupils have begun to observe changes in themselves, and a few are already aware that they are demons, possessed of strange powers. Akira is one of these; another is new student Abe, a massive thug with a gang of grotesque followers who don't have far to go to shift to demon form. Yet another is the beautiful, redheaded nymphomaniac Reiko Omori. When Masao returns to school in a massive energy wave that devastates half the campus, Akira is convinced that his old friend is more than he seems. He sets about to awaken Masao's other self, the demon lord Essedess. Akira himself is the demon lord Aquifel, and Reiko and Abe each have their own transformations. At first they seem to be working against each other to awaken and control Essedess, while Masao, traumatised at the loss of his par-

"... after a hard night shattering buildings with his penis and levelling city blocks when he comes, Masao has to be on time for class in the morning."

Nightmare Campus © Toshio Maeda, Phoenix Entertainment ents, has to cope with strange new feelings, triggered and enhanced by his lust for Yuko. At the end of the first episode he has become Essedess, but (and here is one of the differences between this series and *Overfiend*) all the demons can transform back to their human selves and live their normal human lives. So, after a hard night shattering buildings with his penis and levelling city blocks when he comes, Masao has to be on time for class in the morning.

Altar Egos

School, meanwhile, isn't as it seems. New doctor Mikogami looks exactly like the priestess from the Himalayan temple, and student council president Kusanagi is in cahoots with her in the attempt to 'clean up' the campus. As the story advances we learn that he and Mikogami are members of another ancient and powerful species who call themselves 'the gods'. They and the demons are fighting the next round in an ongoing war, which was brought to a halt for a time when the demons were sealed in the Himalayas. But why did the goddess Mikogami release them? What's their agenda? And is Yuko really one of the gods, and therefore lost to Masao for ever?

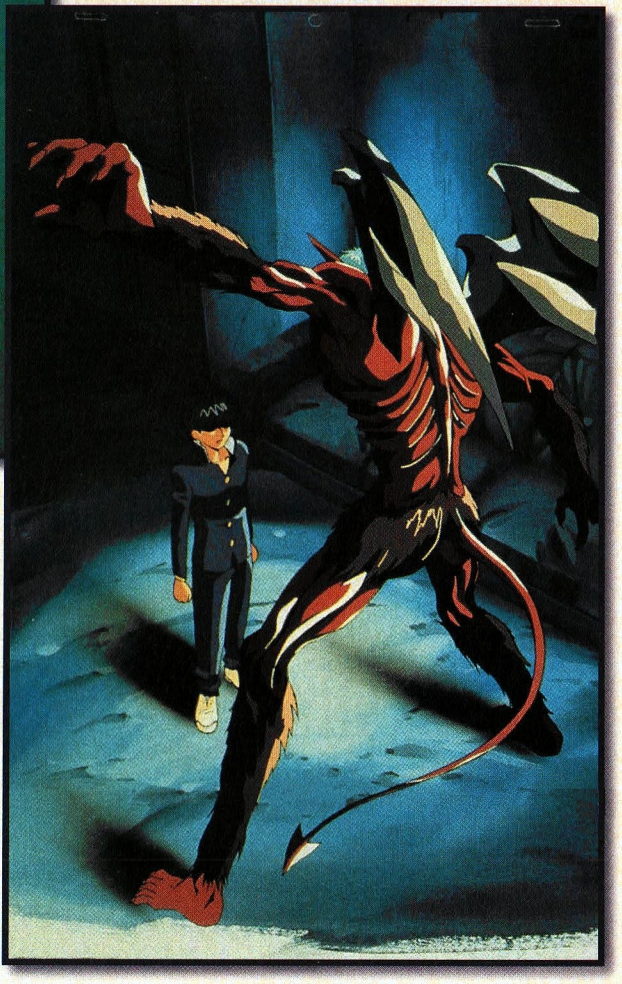


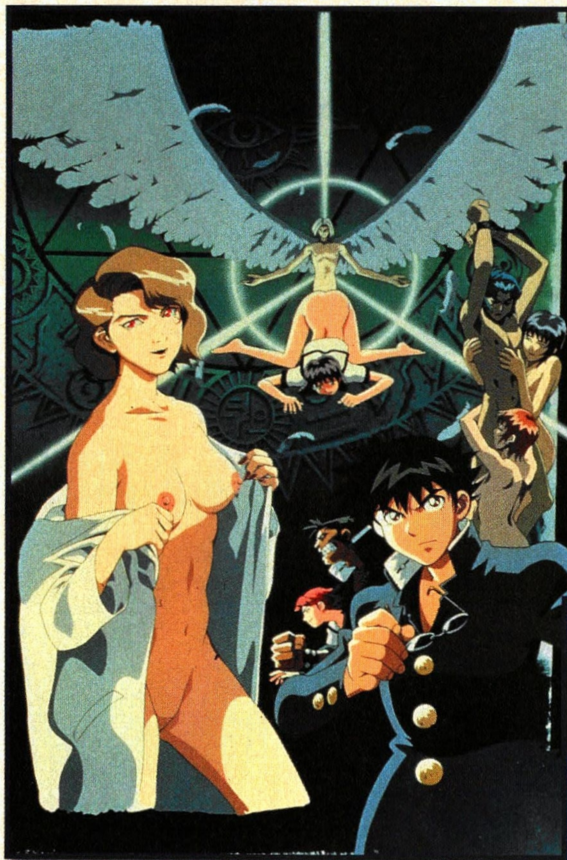
Nightmare Campus ©
Toshio Maeda &
Phoenix Entertainment

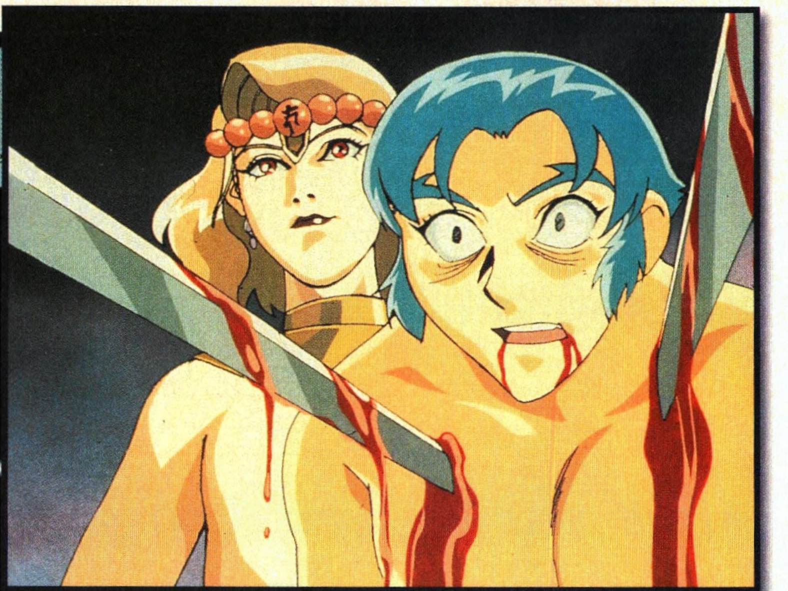
The gods, despite having the coolest clothes and biggest hairstyles, are intent on taking control of the human race for their own ends and display the kind of casual cruelty and arrogant contempt for weaker beings that those of us raised on the idea of loving and benign deities. A mysterious, nameless god in human form shows up in the final episode and takes command of a good deal of Japan's political and military might, and a subplot strand with an honest police officer who's beginning to question his superiors' tactics starts in the same episode. Despite the lessons of the long, half-forgotten demon war, the gods are engaged in a plot to create more demons from ordinary human beings, by using a mysterious force emanating from within the school to spread the 'demonisation effect'. Are these simply cannon-fodder for the gods, or is there a more sinister purpose?

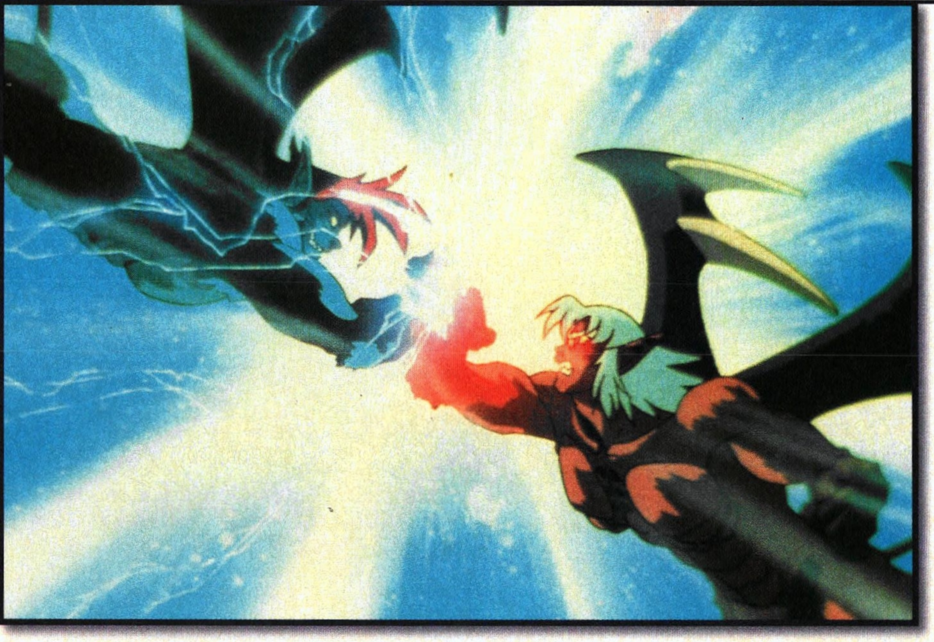
"The series "ends" infuriatingly, with nothing concluded and nothing resolved."

The series "ends" infuriatingly, with nothing concluded and nothing resolved. The demons have finally come together under Masao's guidance and, helped by human allies, are determined to fight the gods to the finish. Yet some believe that Masao sold them out in the last battle; Reiko asks him if he's going to do it again, and he is obviously baffled. Akira has been told a secret which unhinged him completely and led to his betrayal of his own kind and slavery to the gods. Masao is determined to bring his old friend back to himself – just as Akira was determined to make Masao realise his true nature as Essedess - but far from welcoming his rescue from insanity, he sees it as merely being dragged back into Hell.









The Road Goes Ever On And On

Some things never change in Toshio Maeda's erotic stories. All adults, and anyone with adult authority, such as school prefects and team captains, are either malevolent beings seeking power to abuse, well-meaning but self-deceiving fools helpless in the grip of their own desires, or both. All children are programmed by the survival instinct for selfishness. Only those who stand on the cusp of the two states can see clearly, and this clarity of vision and purpose is shortlived. Once adult emotions and urges waken, all chance of freedom recedes and we are doomed to betrayal and deceit. The finer impulses (friendship, courage, love) are ultimately futile, deceptions to make us believe life is worth living in a world doomed to repeat its own mistakes without ever learning from them. Above all else, sex is never, ever just for fun. It's the force which drives us from childhood into adulthood, transforming the power of juvenile sensuality into a blunt instrument to cudgel ourselves and others. It's about control, punishment, weakness, shame, guilt, need or stupidity. Occasionally it is the expression of a love as sublime as it is doomed.

All these themes are clearly outlined in *Nightmare Campus*. One of the most touching moments is at the end of Masao's battle to revive Akira's sanity; the two young men are found, in their human forms, lying naked and unconscious, holding each other's hands. The childlike simplicity of the image is beautiful. A few scenes later Akira awakens to ask why his friend has dragged him back from oblivion to Hell; yet Masao has only served Akira as he was served by being forced to allow Essedess to awaken within him. There are copious sex scenes in every episode, a number of them very nasty and exploitative indeed. One of the gods' main purposes in taking over the human world appears to be to secure an endless supply of willing sex slaves. Yet the gods (the adults of Maeda's metaphoric world) show no affection for anyone, not even their own kind. They either carry out or stage-manage the worst excesses, like the detailed rape and abuse of a virgin schoolgirl in episode four, which triggers the 'demonisation process' and turns her into a spitting hell-cat. The gods' seeming beauty and goodness are a deceptive lure to mask an ugly purpose, and the innocence of a young girl can be turned into something lethal and unnatural.

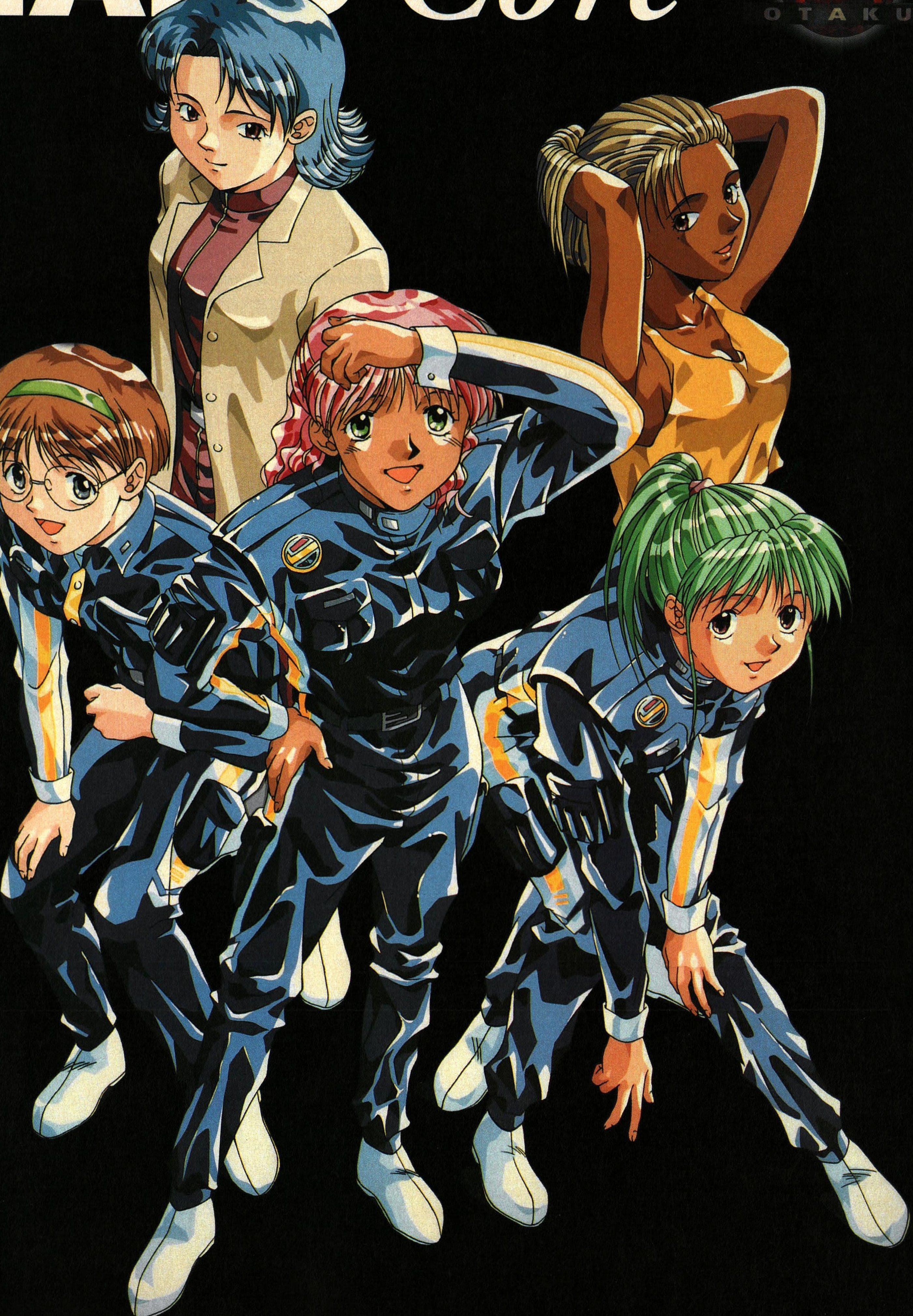
"As the end credits roll, we have no idea how the war between gods and demons will turn out."

A new theme also emerges at the end of episode five: the idea that the young savages may, in the end, have something new to offer the world, something that might survive the transition to adulthood. In episode three, Masao began to be aware that it wasn't a simple question of Essedess controlling him or taking over, but that he was both Essedess and Masao Serra. As Lord of the rag-tag band of demons and humans which is all that stands in the way of the gods, his command to them as they go into battle to save their own kind is to avoid killing. It is the demons (the children ruled by savage instinct) who risk their lives to rescue their own, and those humans made demons by the gods.

As the end credits roll, we have no idea how the war between gods and demons will turn out. Nor do we know whether the rest of Maeda's story will make it onto video, and then to Western release. The *Urotsukidoji* legend was concluded on video mainly because of sales in the West. If *Nightmare Campus* goes the same way, we may finally see a note of optimism at the end of a Maeda tale. But, given his track record, the likelihood is that the world will end in a welter of pain and broken dreams, only to start all over again when the school bell rings in the morning. ●

Nightmare Campus © Toshio Maeda & Phoenix Entertainment

HARD Core



They're rude but they're anything but crude. *Jim Swallow* talks to Otaku Publishing boss Alex McLaren about his line of dodgy "digital manga".

Not many games companies define an entire market, but before the arrival of Otaku Publishing in 1995, the erotic computer game was virtually unknown. Earlier this year, Take 2 Interactive, a mainstream software publisher, were enjoying Top 30 high street sales figures for their erotic title *Lula: Virtual Babe* in a market pioneered by this small Anglo-Japanese company. As 1999 approaches, Otaku are gearing up to move into new territory.

"I went to Japan in 1993, and I saw loads of great software out there," recalls Alex McLaren, the company founder. "We contacted several companies and got a lot of positive feedback, but one studio turned out to be on the committee of the software association for all adult games designers." McLaren's meeting was the turning point in the creation of Otaku; with an investment from the Japanese company, McLaren sold his shares in his former job, a graphic design agency, and brought his new endeavour together. "We felt that Otaku was a great name, not only for use on our website, but because it reflected the kind of person we were selling to." Otaku's first release was not actually a game: *Bishojo Manga* was a CD-ROM of erotic artwork, but the title would go on to become Otaku's blanket name for their entire adult software range.

The majority of Otaku's games use the same limited text-and picture-adventure engine, a digital version of the Eighties' *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks with yes-no, left-right, in-out choices along the way to the climax. *Ring Out* came next, entering the world of bondage and S&M in a lesbian wrestling romp, which has been the only Otaku game so far to cast the player as a female character. The erotic comedy *Timestripper* was next, the ribald tale of a time-travelling sex kitten using her charms to change history. A mix of *Terminator* and *Back to the Future*, *Timestripper* was Otaku's largest game to date, and featured six alternative endings. Without hesitation, McLaren picks out *Timestripper* as his personal favourite, citing the mix of "good artwork, humour in the story and a great translation". The company came back from the future with their next release, *Paradise Heights*, which features a lusty caretaker in an apartment block stacked with unfulfilled girls. The game has already spawned a sequel, whose strapline says it all: "Is sex with the chairman's daughter business, or pleasure?"

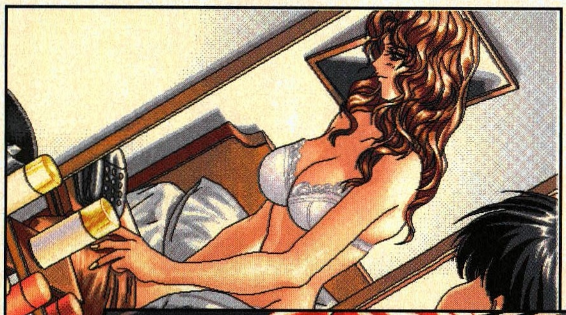
"I was just amazed when I saw this stuff in Japan, because there was just nothing like it in the West.

Otaku have worked extensively with Japanese erotic software design studios Zyx and Foster, translating and repackaging the original games for a Western audience. "We get the Japanese text translated into English, and then that translation is sent to Japan where it's reprogrammed into the software, and then we press the games from a master disc sent here. It takes about a year from when we choose a game to when it reaches the shops. The Western release is about two years after the Japanese one."

So why choose erotic computer games? "I was just amazed when I saw this stuff in Japan, because there was just nothing like it in the West. The quality of the art was so good as well, with these beautiful girls so beautifully drawn. I've always been interested in artwork, from my design background, and just seeing this great stuff knocked me out. I just felt that this genre would be really successful, that it would sell." With the higher degree of anime and manga awareness and its larger population, the United States has been Otaku's best market to date, with a comparatively tougher ride in the UK, thanks to limited magazine coverage and a smaller consumer base. "From our initial research, we expected a big response from France, with its established anime fandom, but we've just not been successful there, and we're not really

Clockwise from facing page: Angel Crisis, Ring Out, Paradise Heights, Timestripper, Let's Party

Pix © Otaku/Zyx



sure why! But Germany has been great for us, and it's an expanding market." Otaku's best selling title to date has been *Ring Out*, which in 18 months has shipped 3000 units and has gone into a second pressing.

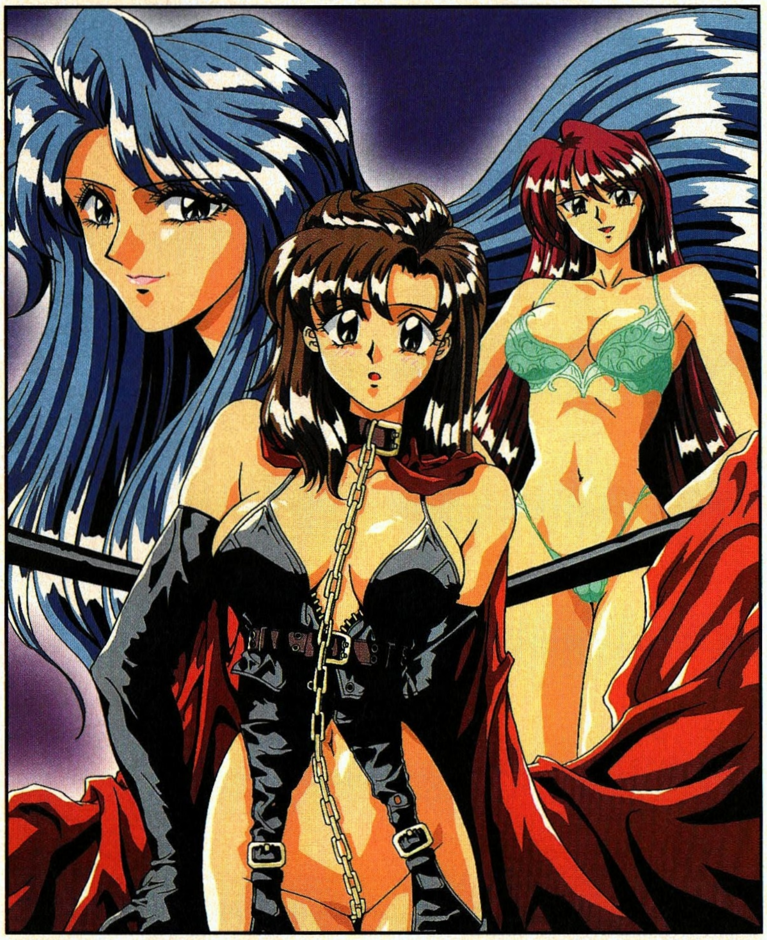
McLaren describes his customers as almost exclusively men in the 18 to 30 age bracket. "Generally, they're into games, anime and manga. A lot of them are students, a lot have an interest in design and illustration, and their personalities reflect a good sense of humour, perhaps a little more intelligence than the usual game buyer, with a willingness to try something different."

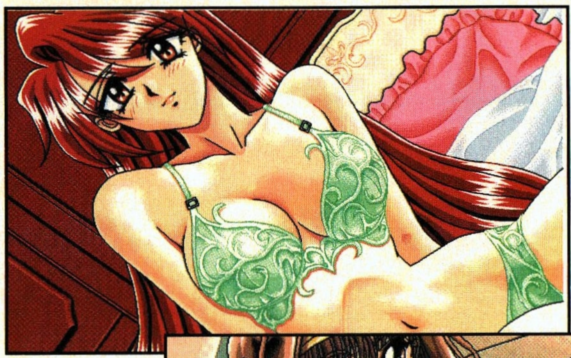
With a typical PC game retailing between £20 and £40, how does McLaren defend the gameplay of his two-year old, technically unsophisticated titles? "Our games are generally half the price of a Playstation or Nintendo game. I would say that what they lack in gameplay they make up for in artwork: each picture takes weeks to create, all hand-drawn with no computer rendering, and they're pixel-perfect. Sometimes, I feel that 'less is more': although you don't get 3-D digitised live-action, what you do get is very high quality. I'm much more in favour of one beautiful, artistic picture than a thousand rough-and-ready digitised samples. I think these titles have a timeless nature to them, because they're not about being state-of-the-art. You can even call the whole series 'digital manga' or 'interactive comics' rather than games."

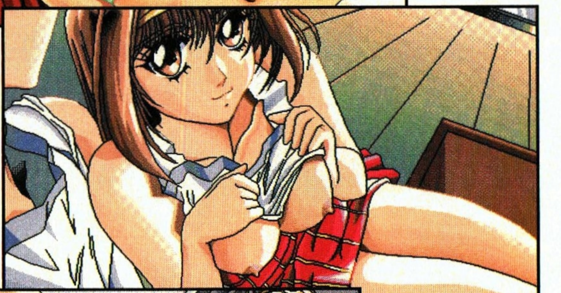
McLaren is quite clear about his relationship with censorship and censors. "I think the stuff that appears in videos and books is far more sick than anything we sell– the games are relatively restrained. I feel that censorship and classification are two different issues. I'm in favour of quite strong classification, though I'm opposed to mindless censorship. Because our games feature still images, they're not covered by the Video Recordings Act, so as they are not moving pictures, they don't have to be classified. We've been able to get away with a little more than we would have, had they been moving images, so next year when we start releasing titles with animation in them, we're probably going to have to get certificated – and that's when we'll find out what we can get away with."

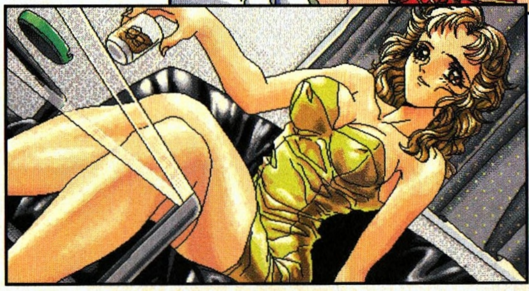
" If we're at all suspicious that a customer's under age, we won't sell it to them."

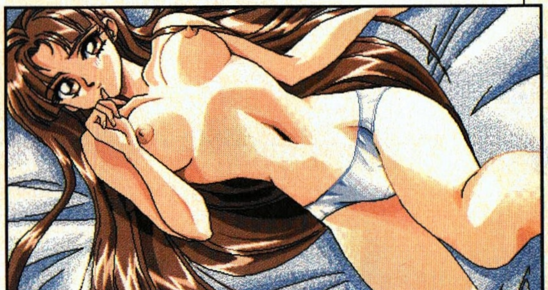
As a father of two, Alex believes in protecting children from strong material. Otaku self-certify to some extent, requiring age declarations on mail-order sales and placing an "Over 18's Only" sticker on store-sold releases. "If we're at all suspicious that a customer's under age, we won't sell it to them." He also mentions









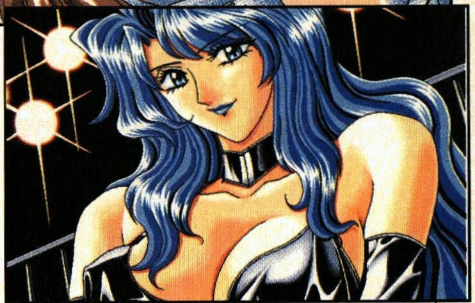


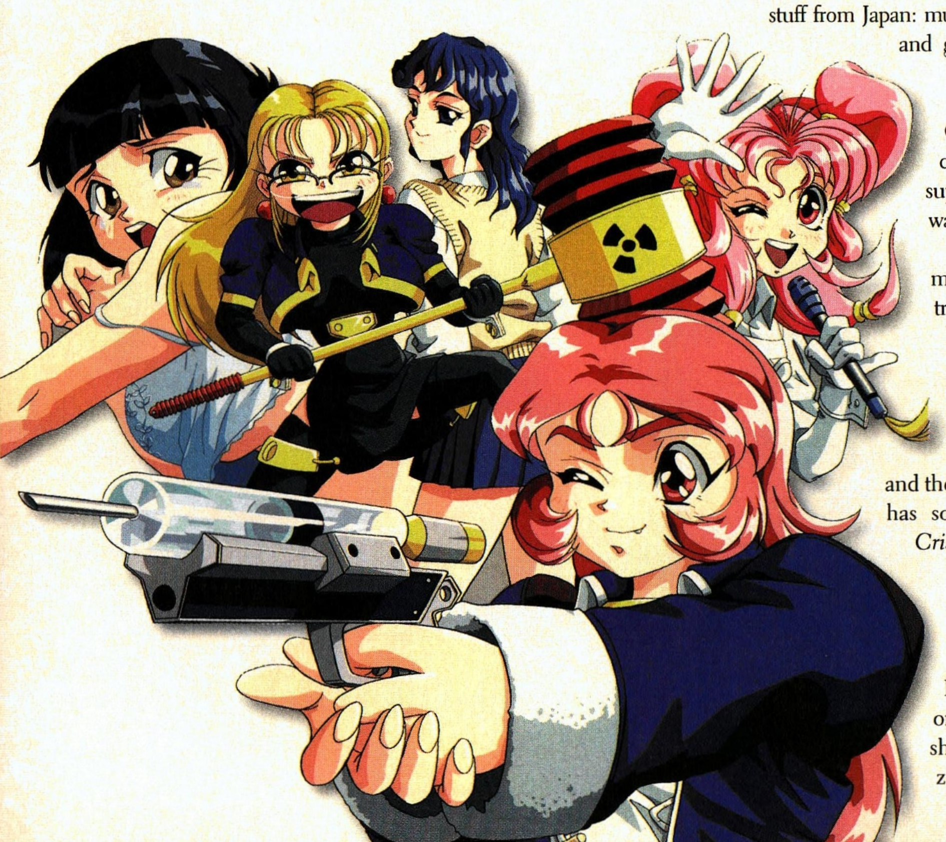
Take 2's *Lula* as an example that an 18 certification won't automatically hurt a game's sales potential, and hopes that he might emulate *Lula's* high-street presence with Otaku's product. He continues; "I don't like the idea that if something is give an 18 certification, it then needs to be cut!" McLaren feels that over-18 consumers are adult enough to make their own choices about erotica, and that draconian censorship is its own worst enemy. "What right has anyone to sit in judgement over what I can watch? It seems to me a breach of fundamental human dignity to have someone say 'You can or cannot watch this.' Once you start to control what people read, see and think, you're on the way to a fascist state." He also adds that in the three years of Otaku Publishing's operations, no complaints over the content of their titles has ever been lodged. "I don't consider our games as pornography; I like to think of them as erotic artwork."

Otaku Publishing has also expanded beyond its games concerns. "I didn't want to get involved with publishing adult books or manga but we were approached by anime fans at a convention asking us to get other stuff from Japan: music CDs, laserdiscs, videos and games." McLaren saw the opportunity to add a mail-order arm to Otaku and started a successful import sideline to support the company's software ventures.

For the future, McLaren is planning more Otaku releases well into 1999, with a trip to Japan to scout out new titles; "We have *Angel Crisis* in the future, and that's a much bigger game, with some 3-D graphics and over a 1000 page script. Our next release is *True Love*, which has just been finished and will be released this November, and then for next year we have *Let's Party*, which has some animation, *Crazy Knuckle*, *Angel Crisis* and *Crazy Knuckle 2*, which will have a mouse-controlled fighting action as well as animation." ●

Over 18's can check out Otaku Publishing's website at **www.otaku.com.** or ring on 0181 699 2199. Under 18's shouldn't be reading this part of the magazine.





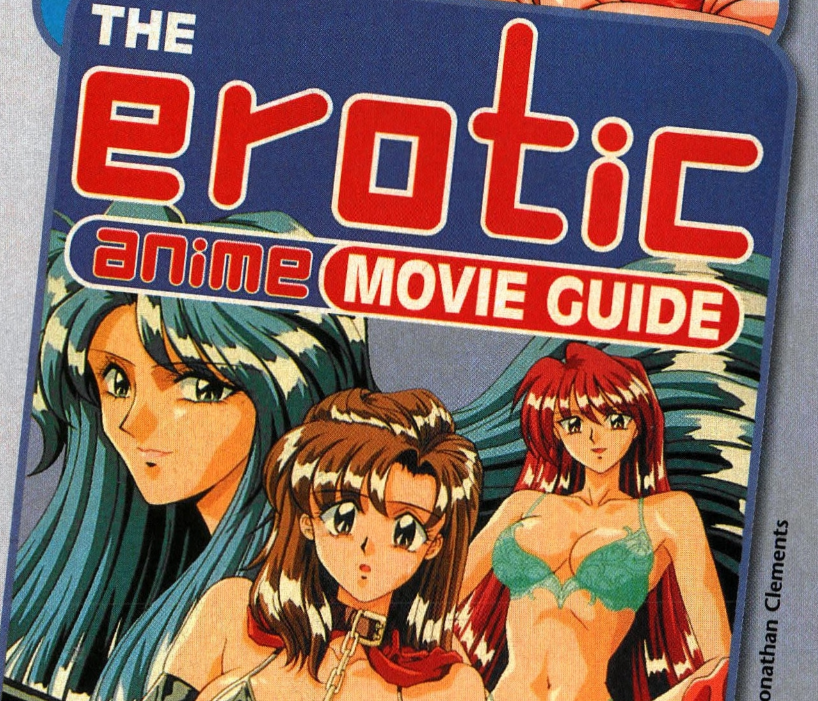
Clockwise from left: Timestripper, Crazy Knuckle, Paradise Heights, True Love, Ring Out x 2, Paradise Heights x 2, True Love, Ring out

Pix © Otaku/Zyx

SEX AND TENTACLES

The first in-depth examination of erotic Japanese animation from Helen McCarthy, author of the award-winning *Anime! Movie Guide*, and Jonathan Clements, editor of *Manga Max*.

- Sex, horror and tentacles
- The forbidden fruit of the *Cream Lemon* phenomenon
- Sex comedy from Go Nagai to U-Jin
- Pretty boys in pain or shonen ai: gay erotica for women
- From *Overfiend* and *Kekko Kamen* to *Holey Pants: Desire on a Stroll* and *New Cream Lemon Dream-Coloured Bunny*
- Computer games, interactive erotica and digital dating
- Censorship
- A-Z listing of over 200 erotic anime titles



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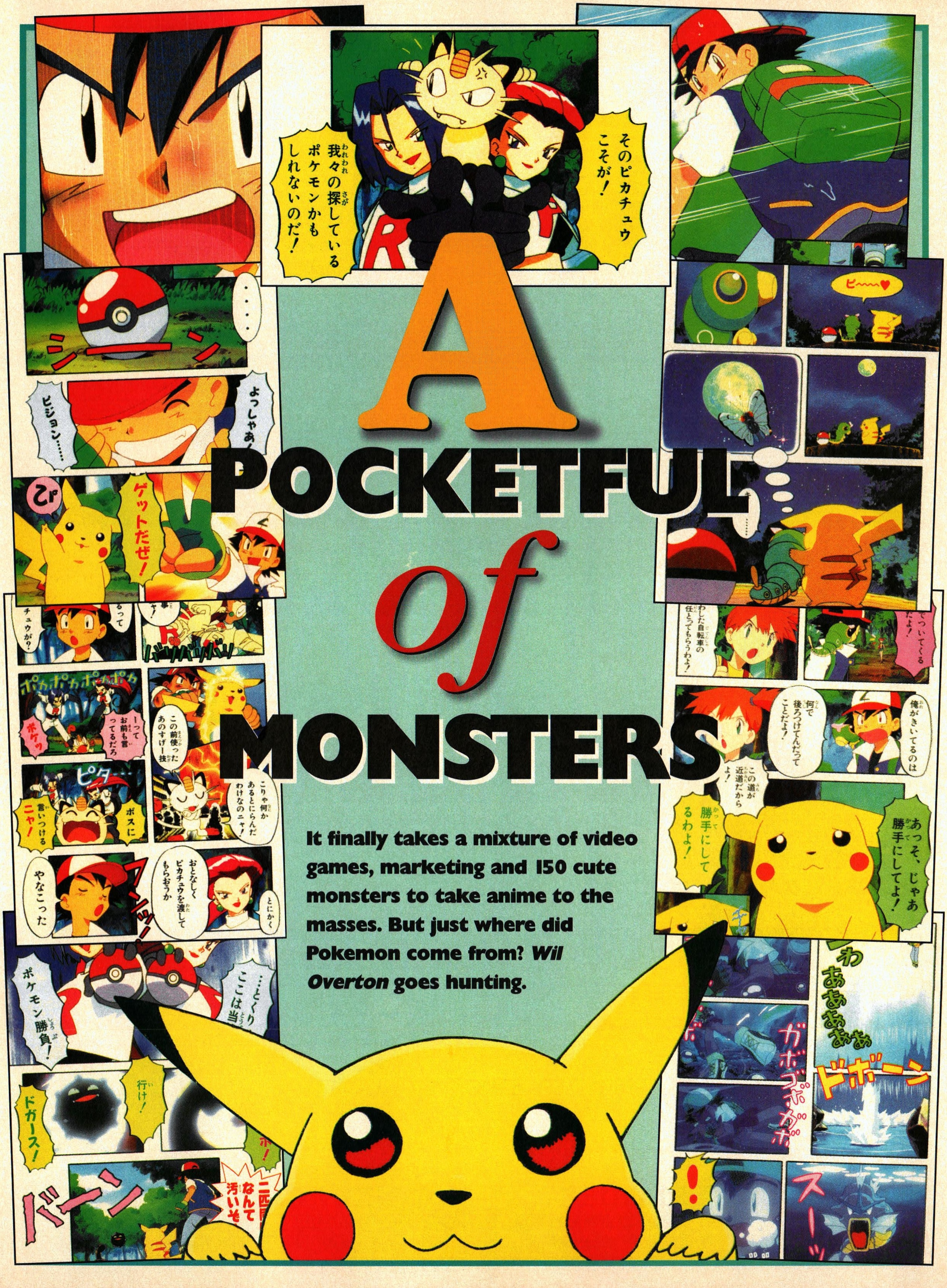
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我々の探しているポケモンかもしれないのだ！
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ピ〜〜♥
ゲットだぜ！
ピ
でついてくるだよ！
わした自転車の任とってもらうわよ！
何で後ろつけてんだってことだよ！
俺がきいてるのは
この道が近道だからよ！
勝手にしてるわよ！
あっそ、じゃあ勝手にしてよ！
ポカポカポカポカ
一ってお前も言ってるだろ
この前使ったあのすげー技
ピタ
ポスに言いつけるニャ！
こりゃ何かあるとにらんだわけなのニャ！
おとなしくピカチュウを渡してもらおうか
とにかく
やなこった
ポケモン勝負！
…とくりここは当
行け！
ドガース！
なんて汚いぞ
バーン
あああああ
ドボーン
ガボゴボ
スーッ
！

A POCKETFUL *of* MONSTERS

It finally takes a mixture of video games, marketing and 150 cute monsters to take anime to the masses. But just where did Pokemon come from? *Wil Overton* goes hunting.

It was December 1997 and a reporter's dream come true: over 700 Japanese children sick and suffering at the hands of a seemingly innocent cartoon. The mainstream perception of Japanese animation had finally been vindicated – anime was a vile and evil influence on the young, and now even its home country knew it to be true. Of course, the fact that Japan, at the time, had no restrictions on the use of high speed flashing lights on domestic television; strobing that may just cause a mild epileptic state in a small percentage of the population never even entered the equation. The show had been cancelled and questions asked as to how something so terrible ever got to the screen in the first place. A perfect two minute filler at the end of a busy news bulletin. Had the reporters digged a little deeper, however, they might just have found an even more sinister plan to control the minds of Japan's young. An insidious plot that went far further than a mere television show. An unstoppable force that spans all aspects of popular culture. The cult of the *Pocket Monsters*.

Number of Game Boy cartridges sold: 9,000,000

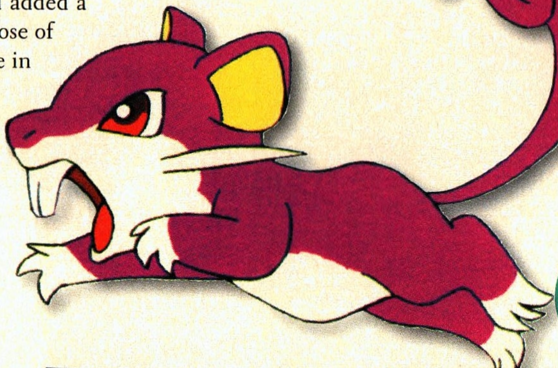
Launched in February 1996 Nintendo's *Pocket Monsters* cartridge for the Game Boy wasn't exactly a new idea, more of an amalgamation of several gaming genres knocking about in Japan at the time. It took the Japanese video gamers' obsession with role-playing games with the schoolyard collecting and trading-card craze, and added a touch of the Barcode Battler phenomenon. For those of you too old to know, this allowed players to engage in duels merely by swiping common household barcodes; in its heyday, a few years earlier, Japanese supermarkets were deluged by hordes of schoolchildren when it was discovered that a certain product held a particularly prized code. With just a dash of the "virtual pet" craze, the stage was set for the next step.

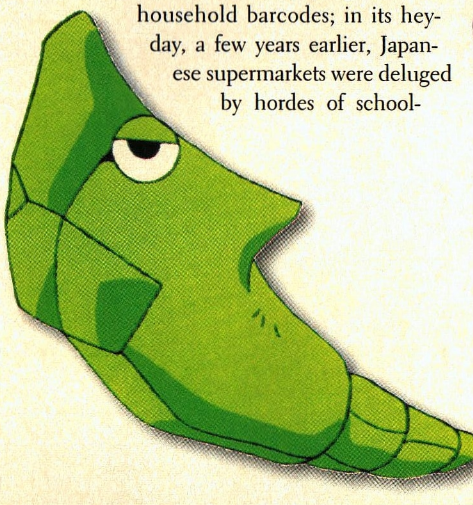
Nearly three years later the three versions of the GB game (Green, Red and Blue) have sold over 8 million copies between them and still sit happily in Japanese gaming charts. The aforementioned TV show, which rapidly became the top-rated children's programme, has now migrated to the cinema screen with this summer's *Pocket Monsters Movie* and its theme tune has sold over a million copies to high-pitched squeaking children across the country. Sales of related merchandise (over 600 different products which cover everything from soft toys to life-sized monster suits) even sell enough to warrant a Pocket Monster shop in the heart of Tokyo and should you need to take a domestic plane journey you can even fly in a Pocket Monster 747. With Pocket Monsters Gold and Silver (sequels to the original title) and Nintendo 64 spin-off games just hitting the shelves, Japan is now beginning to experience the second generation of *Pokemon* (the Japanese nickname for the monsters and, for contractual reasons, the official Western name for the game).

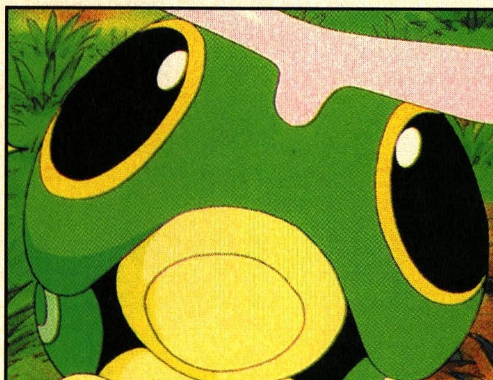
Number of affected children hospitalised overnight: 19

America and Europe, however, are just starting to witness the full madness of the Pocket Monsters phenomenon, so some sort of explanation is in order. Basically, the original Game Boy Pocket Monsters requires you, as a novice Pokemon Trainer (now known as Ash in the Western game and anime) to wander about the PM world trying to capture all the different monsters hidden within the land, eventually hoping to become a Pokemon Master. You start off with a single beast who you train and can subsequently use to fight (using a typical turn-based RPG combat system) and capture other Pokemon which you can then add to your own menagerie.

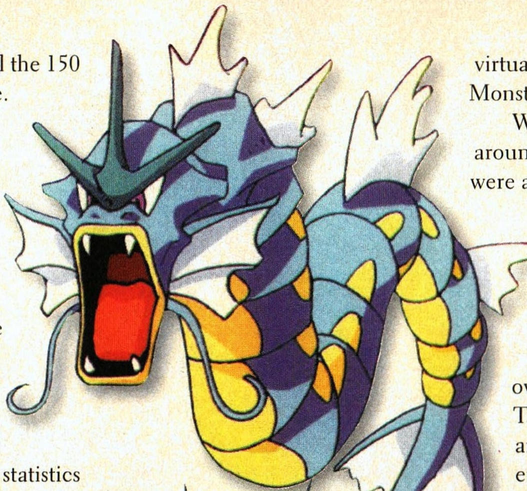
Number of fans suffering seizures etc: 700







てんとう虫コミックス アニメ版
ポケットモンスター
POCKET MONSTERS
1
原作 田尻 智 監修 石原恒和



However, in a canny move by Nintendo, not all the 150 monsters are available on any one cartridge. Should you want the full Pokemon set you'll either need to buy all the Pocket Monsters coloured variations (Red, Green and Blue for Japan and just Red and Blue for the West) and play each through to completion or enter into the next stage of the PM phenomenon - trading. By linking up two Game Boys, players can enter a building in the game called the Pokemon Center to trade and battle their monsters in a sort of electronic Top Trumps. Trading becomes even more important for the completist collector when you realise that no two Pokemon are ever alike. Apart from their differing statistics due to the amount of training they've received, there are dozens of different attacks for each monster to learn, but they can only ever utilise four. Strategic decisions must be made over what abilities to keep and what to discard. With 150 individual monsters each with a variety of possible attributes and status each player's collection is potentially unique and the game of 'my Pokemon collection is better than yours' continues long after you've managed to complete the RPG section of the cartridge.

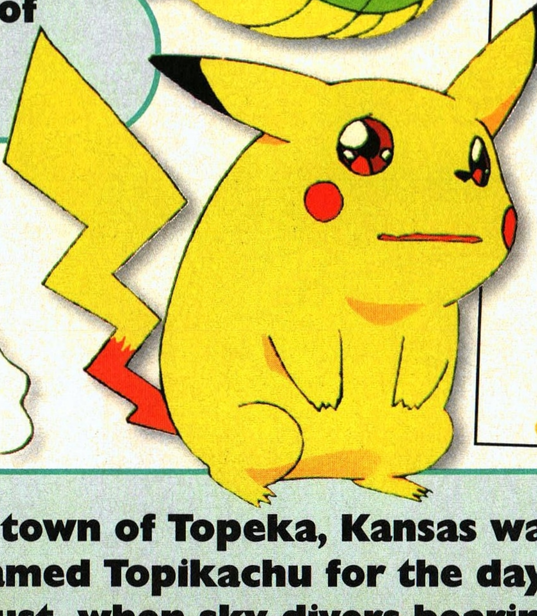
Percentage of American network markets carrying the anime: 90

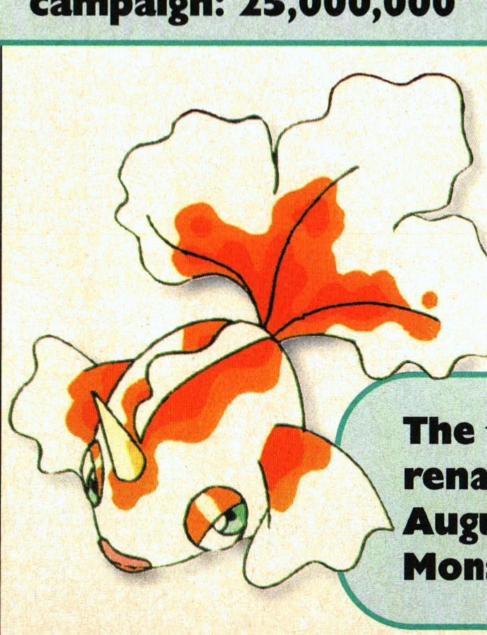
For those owners who hanker after seeing their horde in something more than lo-res monochrome Nintendo have now released Pocket Monsters Stadium for their Nintendo 64 console. Packaged with a special GB Pack that plugs into the N64 controller, gamers can download their Pokemon data from the Game Boy to the Stadium cartridge and see their monsters fight it out in glorious special effects-riddled 3D. Complete with a full catalogue and management system, the game sold out on day one. Following on from the Stadium you'll soon also be able to go on a virtual Pokemon safari (cameras only, mind) with Pocket Monsters Snap.

Estimated dollar value of Nintendo marketing campaign: 25,000,000

With a hundred and fifty different monsters (going up to around 250 with the new Gold and Silver games) there were always going to be some Pokemon that were more popular than others and without a doubt the most popular Pocket Monster in Japan is the rotund yellow Pikachu. His rosy-cheeked, smiling visage can now be seen plastered over the majority of Pokemon merchandise and such is his popularity that he's now starting to branch out in his own spin-off games. First off the blocks is the Tamagotchi-like Pocket Pikachu which neatly steps around the usual virtual pet problem by receiving life-energising points (or watts - Pikachu is an Electric Pokemon type, see) from the walking action of his owner (the idea is that you carry him around clipped to your belt) and going to sleep when you do by setting his personal clock. Should you desire to really communicate with Pikachu, though, you'll have to wait for 'Pikachu Genki Dechu' (I'm OK says Pikachu) on the Nintendo 64 which, through a plug-in microphone headset, lets you talk and hopefully encourage the little fella' to trust in you. Shout too much and he'll start to sulk and ignore you but give him a virtual apple and he'll follow you around all day (well, to edges of the TV screen, anyway).

If you're still wondering what all the fuss is about you're obviously well past your tenth birthday. While Sony and Sega would have us believe that video gaming is growing up, Nintendo haven't forgotten that there's still an awful lot of kids out there. Pocket Monsters isn't just about sitting in front of your TV (or Game Boy) screen in isolation. It encourages you to mix with your friends, too – whether it's for trading your Nindoking for the strongest Rujura you've ever seen or just talking about last night's episode of the anime. A cynical marketing ploy or just understanding what kids like? The choice is yours, but don't make it until you've held an ultra cute talking Pikachu in your hand. ●





The town of Topeka, Kansas was renamed Topikachu for the day on 27 August, when sky-divers bearing Pocket Monster gifts landed all over it.

Pokemon pix © Nintendo, Creatures, Gamefreak, TV Tokyo, Sho-pro, JR Kikaku

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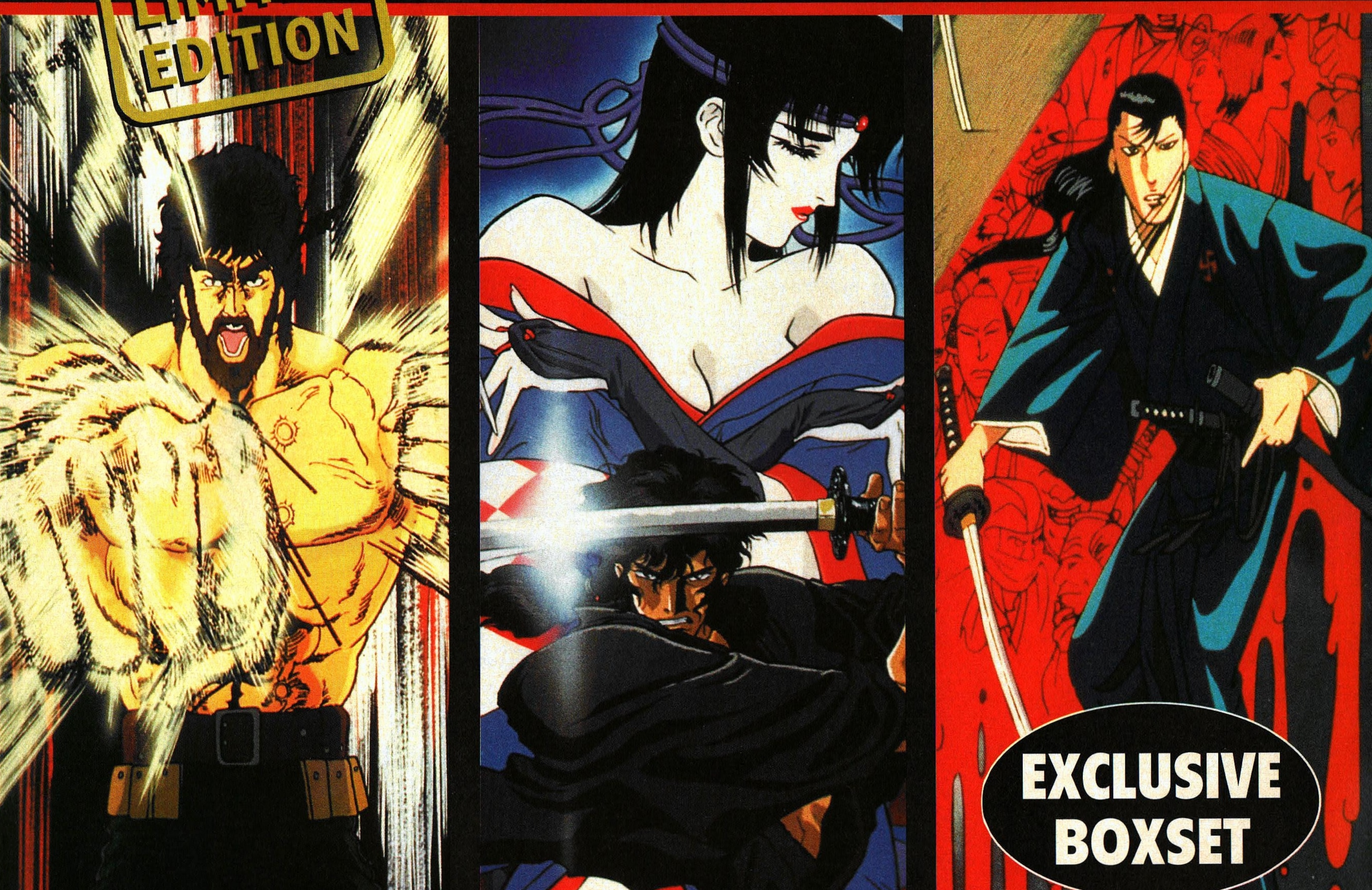

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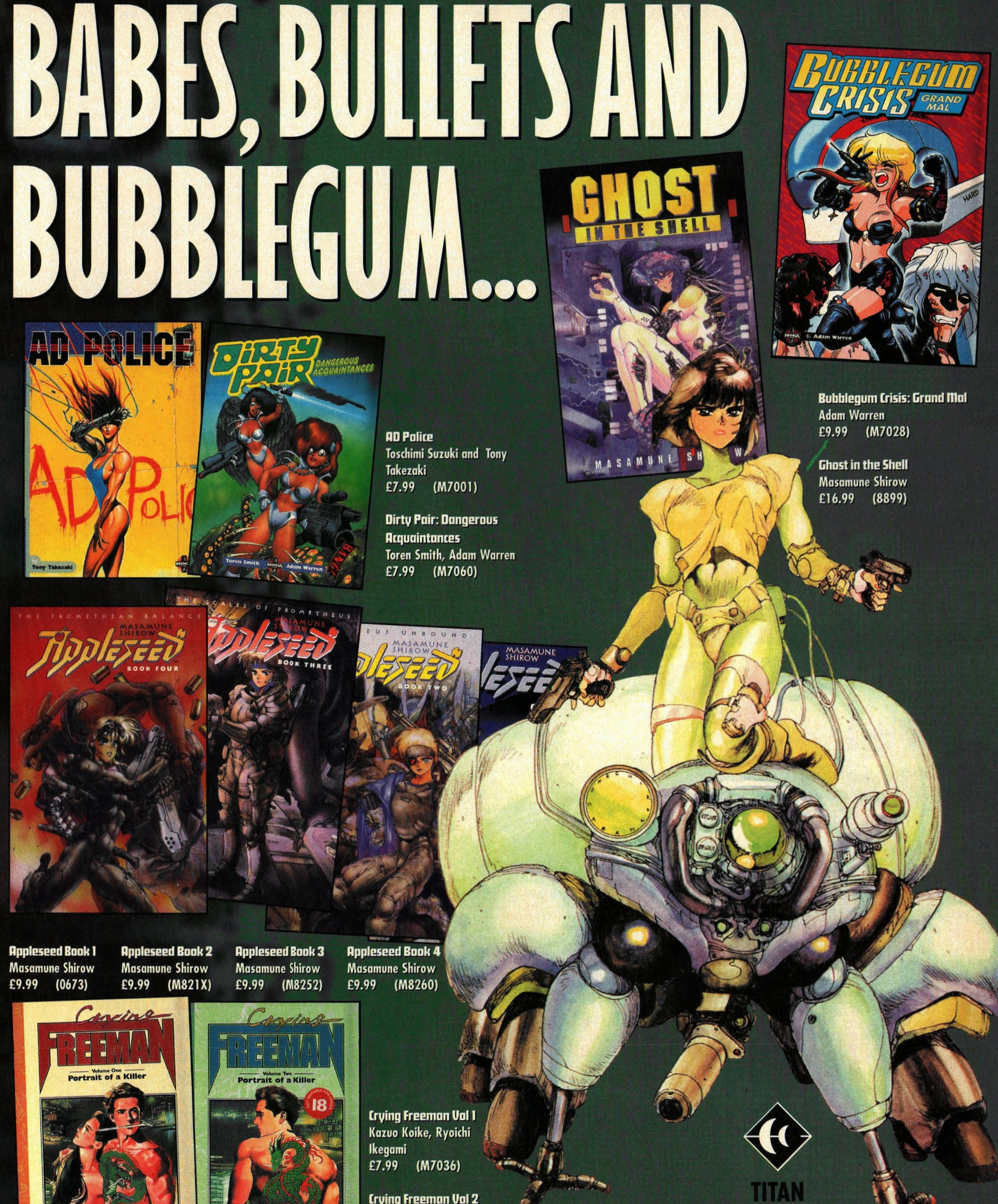
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HOW TO ENTER

Study Images 1, 2 and 3 from *Colony Wars: Vengeance* printed below and simply match them with the correct pictures (A, B and C). For example, if you think Image 1 is taken from Picture C, indicate this on the entry form. Then complete the tie-breaking sentence and send your completed entry form to: TITAN'S VENGEANCE COMPETITION, Titan Magazines, 42 – 44 Dolben Street, London SE1 0UP.

Photocopies of the entry form are acceptable. Entries MUST be received by **Tuesday 12 January 1999.** The Editor's decision is final. Multiple entries will be consigned to warp hole oblivion. Full terms and condition are available upon request.

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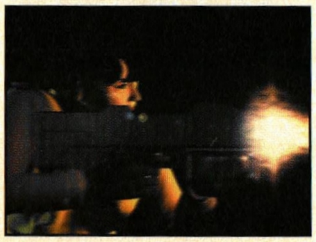

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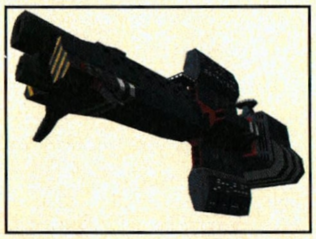

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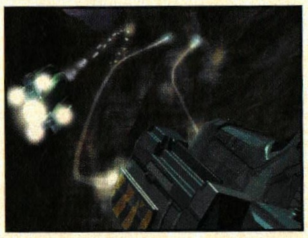

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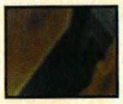


Image 2

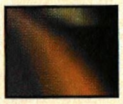


Image 3

Match the correct image numbered 1 – 3 with the correct Picture (A, B or C).

Complete the following tie-breaker in no more than 12 words: I would like to win a Sony PlayStation because

Name

Age

Please tick this box if you do not want to receive information about future product releases ☐

Address

FAN Scene

In a bizarre crash of time continua, this issue manages to feature a convention report on October's Ayacon, but won't be able to review any of the fanzines we find there until next month. *Julia Sertori* and *Jim Swallow* are this month's probes into the mysterious world of fandom.

ROLE CALL

Role Call is the magazine of console-based "role-playing" games, and stuff. Issue ten features a whopping *Sakura Wars* feature and a bitchily enjoyable rundown of games to avoid called "Cream of the Crap". Crisp, relevant art in a manga style adorns the black and white pages. There's also a painfully accurate gallery of fanboy and fangirl archetypes, and much gnashing of teeth about the incompetence of staff in computer shops. Considering the trouble I usually get into in this magazine whenever I say something *mildly* controversial like "This anime isn't worth buying", it's with a welcoming glow that I read lines like "THESE PEOPLE MUST BE DESTROYED," in *Role Call*. Apart from an unfortunate moment when the writers fail to realise that *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* had just a smidgen of a life before the anime version, the magazine is also very well-informed. It's difficult to imagine something that would serve as a better inspiration for other fanzine editors. *Role Call* is great value for money, well-produced, and cheeky. Unlike many fanzines, I don't see people buying this out of a sense of duty or charity. They'll buy it because it's a good read, and if you're one of those anime/gaming fringe fans, a useful resource. Like all magazines, it has its hit and miss moments, but unlike many of the leaflet-sized excuses in the

ISSUE TEN £1.50

ROLE CALL

サクラ大戦

SAKURA WARS

Ani-mayhem on the Sega Saturn!

PLUS: Final Fantasy Tactics - Panzer Dragoon Saga - Fire Emblem

ROLE CALL NEWS

FINAL FANTASY VIII

CONFIRMED

Above: Final Fantasy VIII's Squall Leonheart. Cloud in furs? You decide. Below: Billy Lee Black, from XenoGears.

SAMURAI SPIRITS

scene, *Role Call* has enough space to make mistakes and keep on keeping on. Assuming there's something you like on every page, it's actually better value than *Manga Max*. Immortal quote: "...the result is an issue so good, even World War II veterans wouldn't turn their back on it." They said that, not me.●

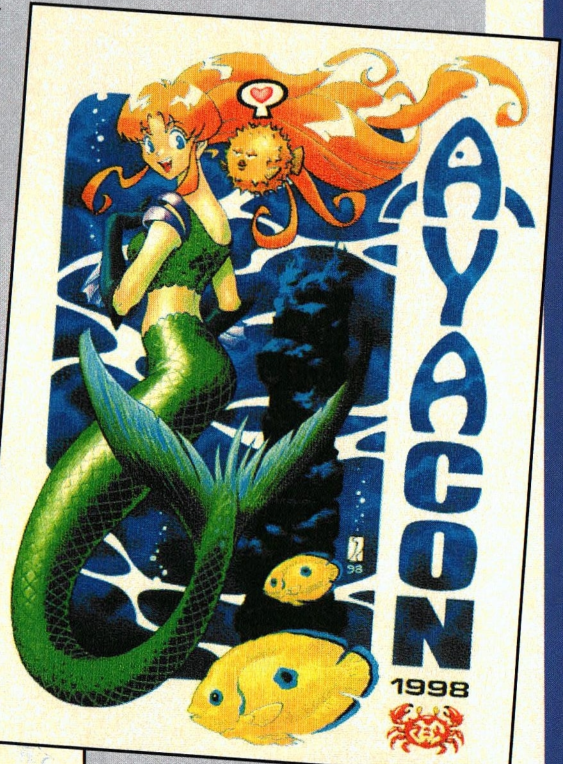
Role Call published "sort of" quarterly by Dave Sanders, Flat 2, 18 Station Road, Portstewart, County Londonderry, Northern Ireland, Belfast, BT55 7DA, UK. Phone: 01265 836946. E-mail: AD.Sanders@ulst.ac.uk. Subscriptions £4 for three issues. You can catch up on the first few issues with The Best of Role Call, £2.99 from the same address.

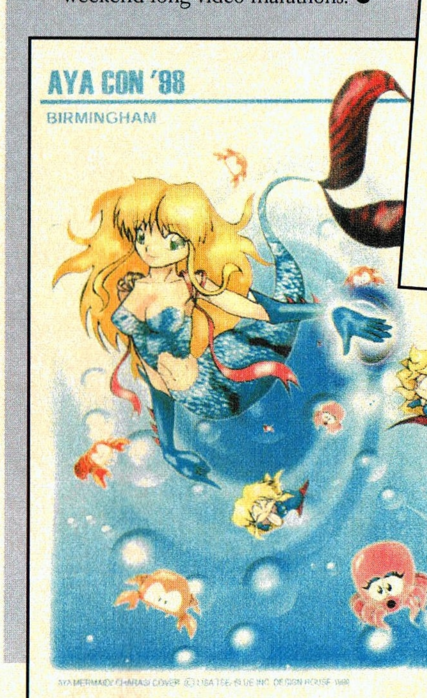
AYACON

AYACON '98
23rd-25th October 1998 ◆ Birmingham, UK

Birmingham's Grand Hotel, a long-term fan favourite, opened its doors once again for the October Ayacon, a chance for anime-lovers to spend vast amounts of money in the dealers' rooms and watch loads of anime. As always, the Grand and its staff performed excellently but this debut convention by local group Anime Central had a few teething problems. While there was a good spread of material in the video programme, the screening list fell foul of haphazard scheduling and poor information. Con book pages spent talking about London's video arcades and anime *not* screened at the event would have been better filled with a guide. As it was, only Jim McLennan's late-night video show provided adequate data about what was being shown. It was impressive to see anime like *Horus Prince of the Sun* jostling for space with *Brainpowerd*, but the only way for a neophyte to get any idea of the content was to turn up and watch. In the case of *Cowboy Bebop*, this meant staying up until 5:00am with your fingers crossed. There was even an opportunity to see *End of Evangelion*, although the copy was very bad quality, subtitled in Chinese and scheduled opposite the masquerade.

Non-video events varied; the masquerade, the Namco-sponsored games room and Helen McCarthy's guest speech went well, but the auction and the majority of the panels were poorly structured. Overall, attendee morale was high, and the Ayacon team are to be commended for a good first attempt. Let's hope that they address their failings next year and help reverse the trend of British anime conventions becoming no more than weekend-long video marathons. ●





If you want your fanzine to be dangled in front of thousands of anime fans all over the world, you could do worse than send a copy to *Manga Max*, Titan Magazines, 42-44 Dolben Street, London, SE1 0UP, UK.

Convention DATA

Send a stamped-addressed envelope to the addresses below for further information.

KATSUCON 5
12-14 February 1999
Hyatt Regency Crystal
City, Arlington VA, US.
Katsucon, PO Box 8151, Reston, VA 20195-2051.
E-mail: katsucon@io.com.
Website: www.io.com/~katsucon/

ANIME'99
19-21 February 1999
Holiday Inn, Rotterdam,
Netherlands.
Stichting J-pop, Fibrillendonk 5, 6218 HH
Maastricht, The Netherlands
Website: www.anime99.home.ml.org/
Video program info E-mail: niels@angel.gr.jp
Dealer and other enquiries to:
anime99@snowcrash.demon.nl

ANIMAZEMENT
19-21 March 1999
Raleigh, Raleigh NC,
US
Animazement, PO Box 1383, Cary, NC 27512-1383
www.sorrelltech.com/animazement

FANIME CON 99
19-21 March 1999
Wyndham Hotel, San Jose,
CA
Website: www.fanime.com

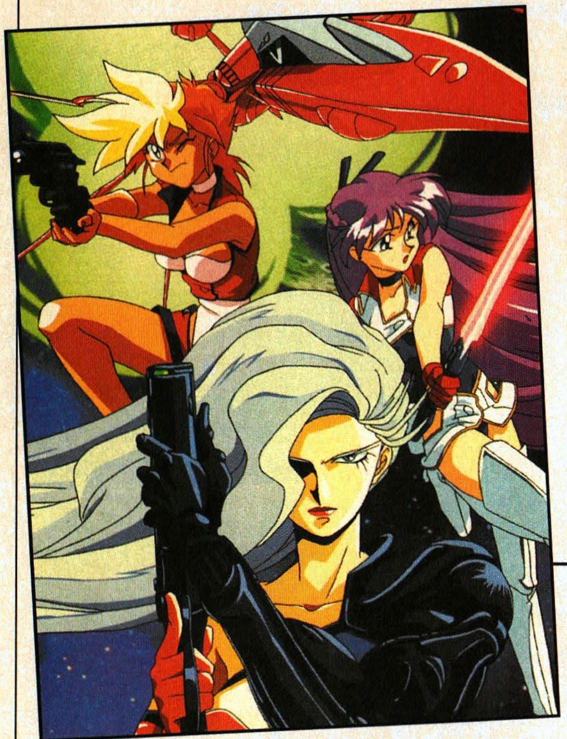
**ANIME CENTRAL,
THE MIDWESTERN
ANIME CONVENTION**
23-25 April 1999
Ramada Plaza Hotel O'Hare,
Rosemont, IL, US.
Guests: Robert DeJesus, Scott Frazier. Contact:
Anime Central, c/o Jack Chiu, 119 S. Emerson Street,
Suite 231, Mount Prospect, IL.
E-mail: agitator@ kaiwan.com
Website: www.acen.org/

ROBOCON 1999
15-17 October 1999
Doubletree Hotel, Anaheim, CA, US.
Contact: ROBOCON 1999, P.O. Box 53651, Irvine,
CA 92619
E-mail: ROBOCON99@aol.com

Reviews

★★★★★ LOVE IT ★★★★ BUY IT ★★★ TRY IT ★★ WATCH IT ★ FORGET IT

Reviewers' opinions are not necessarily those of the magazine. National flags denote territory of release for the item being reviewed, and not necessarily the location of the dub or original distributor. Readers are reminded that the PAL and NTSC video formats are not interchangeable in a standard VCR.



Dirty Pair Flash

Acts 1-3

🇬🇧 **Director:** Tsukasa Sunaga
Duration: 50 mins, dub
Certificate: 12
Price: £12.99 ea.
Distributor: AD Vision UK, PAL
Reviewer: David Hughes
Overall Rating: ★★★

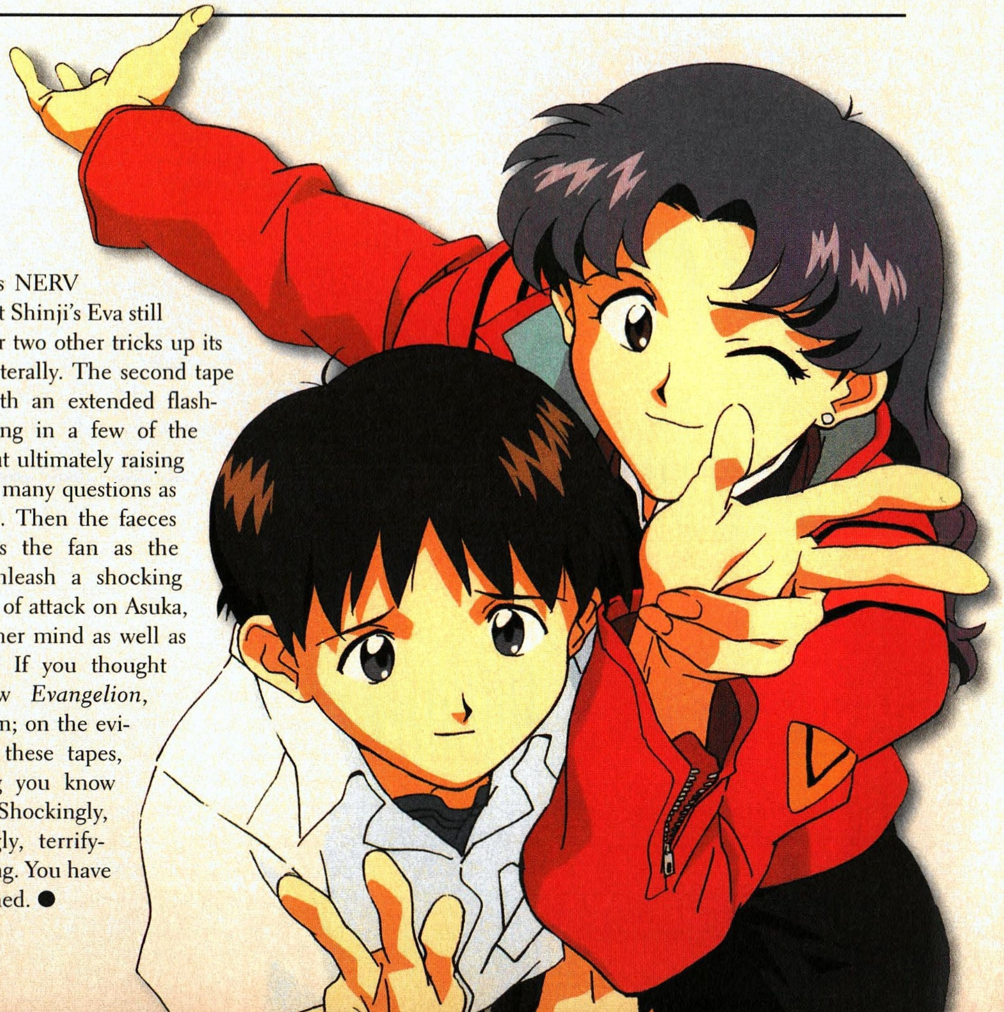
The world's sexiest social workers are back in their latest adventure, but technically their first - the Flash is as in "flashback". More dangerous than nitro and glycerine, Kei and Yuri are teen tearaways with huge guns, pneumatic figures and (more often than not) strategically-ripped outfits. After a weak start in the first episode, mainly due to background-filling exposition, the animation improves and the action begins in the next part, as the two troubleshooters (so-called because they shoot stuff and cause trouble) chase halfway across the galaxy after some computer card, pursued by a deadly assassin and facing off against Lady Flair, a foxy and formidable "femme fatale". Though connections with the "later" Dirty Pair stories are tenuous, to say the least, as far as most confirmed Kei and Yuri fans are concerned, any plot merely gets in the way of the fun. But to the rest of us, watching *Dirty Pair Flash* is like going to the movies and having two annoying teenagers ruin it by yelling and shouting all the way through - except this time they're the stars. ●

Neon Genesis Evangelion 10 & 11

(eps. 19-22)

🇬🇧 **Director:** Hideaki Anno
Duration: 50 mins, dub
Certificate: 12
Price: £12.99 ea.
Distributor: AD Vision UK
Reviewer: David Hughes
Overall Rating: ★★★★★

As Hideaki Anno's mecha masterpiece nears its climax, the question is whether the best anime series of all time can actually get better? You bet it can. With Shinji quitting as pilot of the giant android Eva units, Toji laid up in hospital and two of the Eva units out of action, Gendo is running out of options when the latest and most fearsome Angel attack hits NERV centre. Yet Shinji's Eva still has one or two other tricks up its sleeve... literally. The second tape begins with an extended flashback, filling in a few of the blanks, but ultimately raising at least as many questions as it answers. Then the faeces really hits the fan as the Angels unleash a shocking new form of attack on Asuka, invading her mind as well as her body. If you thought you knew *Evangelion*, think again; on the evidence of these tapes, everything you know is wrong. Shockingly, disturbingly, terrifyingly wrong. You have been warned. ●



Record of Lodoss War

Directors: Akinori Nagaoka, Shigeto Makino, Katsuhisa Yamada et al.
Duration: 72 mins, dub
Certificate: 12
Price: £12.99 ea.
Distributor: Pioneer, PAL
Reviewer: Peter J Evans
Rating: ★★★★

Lodoss is a cursed island, a fantasy kingdom still smouldering from the effects of a war between the gods of darkness and light. After centuries of relative calm, evil forces from the past are once again growing in power, and it is the destiny of six heroes (fighter, elf, dwarf, mage, cleric and thief) to battle the darkness and tread a path oddly reminiscent of a similar group who set out thirty years before.

The first episode in this volume is a prologue, set partway through the story; a classic dungeon bash complete with traps, treasure, and something big and scaly between our heroes and the exit. After that we go back to the very beginning, as the evil goings-on in Lodoss reach such a peak that this group of mis-matched adventurers leave their homes in search of some answers, and immediately run into the leading edge of an invasion force.

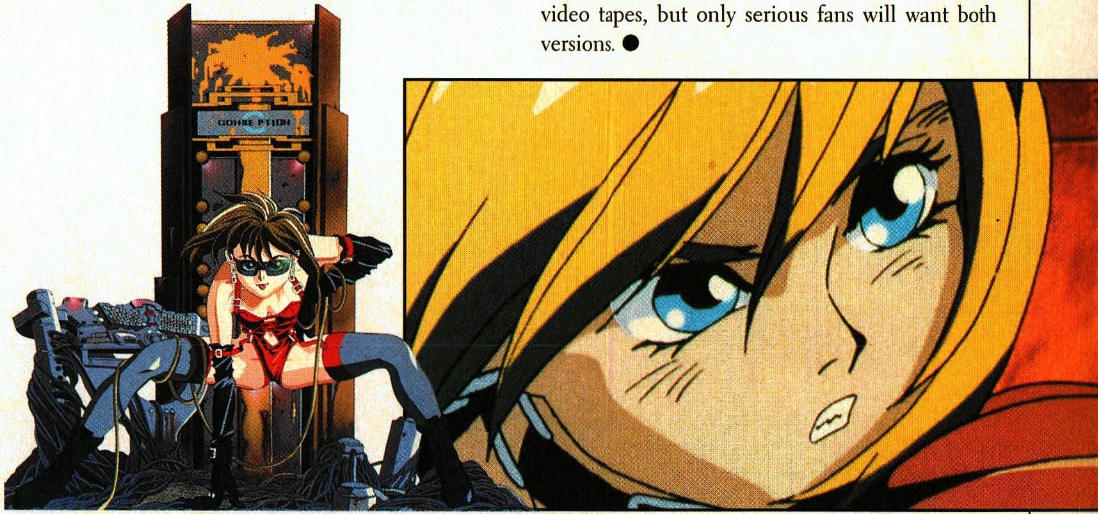
While the script is no great shakes, the voicing is quite passable, and the whole affair is backed with a rich orchestral score that is marred only by a couple of slightly dodgy songs over the opening and closing credits *[NB: Not the superior versions from the* Lodoss *CDs- Ed]*. Probably the best example of archetypal fantasy anime around. ●

Armitage III Polymatrix

Director: Hiroyuki Ochi
Duration: 88 mins, (re)dub
Certificate: 18, widescreen
Price: £12.99
Distributor: Pioneer, PAL
Reviewer: Jeremy Clarke
Rating: ★★★

For those already familiar with Pioneer's four-part cyberpunk series, this re-edit adds little. The 4:3 telly aspect ratio is turned into 1.85:1 widescreen for the film, which splices footage as per the *Macross Plus* movie edit. Excised sequences include much of episode two (the female sex cyborgs) that lose little by omission and help tighten the pacing. The most substantial additions to the footage are an early scene in which Armitage runs down a suspect, and a new ending. Mills and Willspank, the two former leading actors are replaced by Kiefer Sutherland (*Dark City, The Lost Boys*) and Elizabeth Berkley (*Showgirls*) who revoice the original's dialogue virtually word for word (although Sutherland gets a pointless new speech following the big fight that closed video episode one). Sutherland lends more of a down-at-heel quality to Martian cop Ross, while Berkley manages to make Armitage herself harder-edged and less irritatingly cute. Hopefully their presence will earn this release attention beyond that of already dedicated anime fans.

Otherwise, the voice cast and sound mix remain largely unaltered. A bargain at half the price of four video tapes, but only serious fans will want both versions. ●



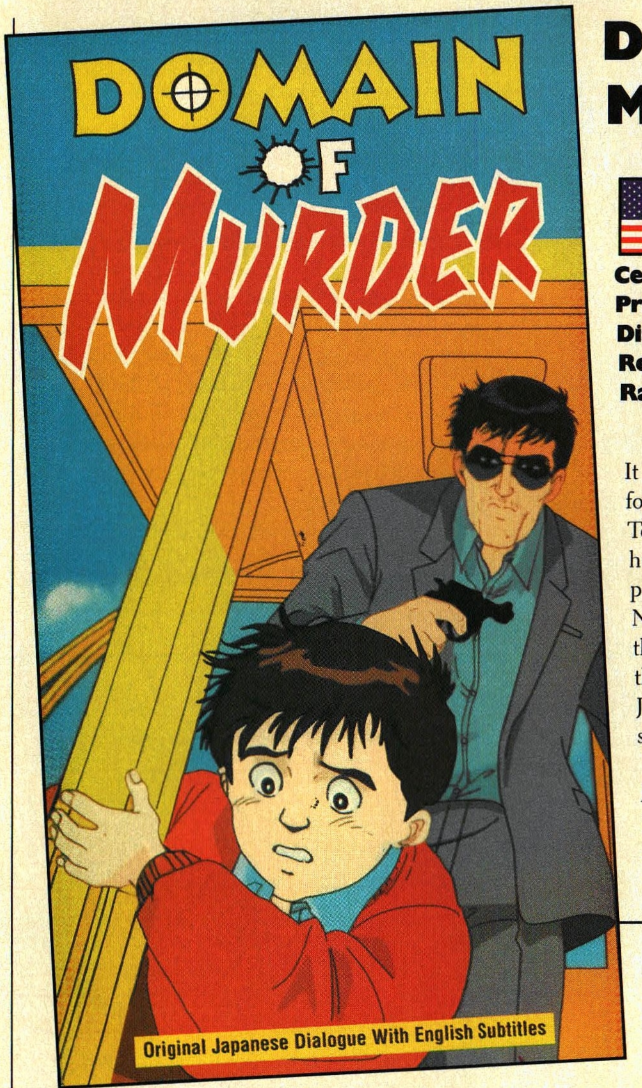
Tenchi the Movie: Tenchi Muyo in Love

Director: Hiroshi Negishi
Duration: 90 mins, dub
Certificate: 12, widescreen
Price: TBC
Distributor: Pioneer, PAL
Reviewer: Jeremy Clarke
Rating: ★★★

An intergalactic criminal called Kain (looking and behaving more like some supernatural monster in just one of the script holes too numerous to mention) escapes from his prison in sub-space and resolves to wreak revenge on the House of Jurai, specifically Tenchi's mother-to-be in 1970.

Cue a *Back to the Future* rip-off, except Negishi fails to set up 1970 properly. Unlike *Back to the Future*'s 1955, there isn't really much difference, merely a monster to vanquish, which Tenchi eventually does with an unexplained light sabre. Lacking anime's usual complex plotting and failing to capitalise on its obvious sources, this big-screen *Tenchi* outing is merely another fly-past by the franchise characters.

While light years ahead of the dire *Pretty Sammy* spin-off, it doesn't measure up to those first six OAV episodes which look better and better as the years go by. Plus points are largely in the visuals: the time tunnel effect, the beautiful coda involving Tenchi's youthful parents, the scenes of school buses, the Tokyo Underground and the Tokyo Tower. Otherwise, strictly passable fare... but no more. ●


DOMAIN OF MURDER
Original Japanese Dialogue With English Subtitles

Domain of Murder

Director: Masaru (Akira?) Suzuki
Duration: 51 mins, sub
Certificate: unrated
Price: $29.95
Distributor: USMC, NTSC
Reviewer: Cathy Sterling
Rating: ★★★

It starts as just another missing persons job for private investigator Goro Nanase. Mrs Toyama wants him to locate her missing husband. The only clue: his face on a poster, wanted for murder. The race is on, Nanase against the Tokyo Police, through the snow-bound Japanese countryside to the slush and dirty sleet of small-town Japan. No demons, no tentacles, no spaceships.

Like a colourful episode of *Cracker* (or *Fitz*, if you will), this is a tense psychological puzzle. But the real mystery is why this gripping drama has sneaked out without a whisper. *Domain of Murder* is just one episode from the 24 volume manga *Hello Hedgehog*, but sadly the only one to be animated. Artist Kenshi Hirokane also created the best-selling *Section Chief Kosaku Shima*, and the media saga *Last News*. This is the Japan familiar to Hirokane's adult manga audience, a lower middle-class squalor of hard-drinking salarymen and smoking mothers. *Domain of Murder* offers an invaluable peek into the sentimental, grotty world of humdrum Japan. You can see this sort of melodramatic thriller any night on Japanese television, but the live versions aren't as well-written; this already-superb story was adapted for the screen by Akinori Endo, of *Five Star Stories* and *Cyber City Oedo*. The voice work is excellent, from Shigeru *(Arion)* Nakahara in the lead, to a wonderful cameo role from You Inoue (*Patlabor*'s Kanuka Clancy) as a bar-girl past her prime. Endo's script contains some beautifully observed moments, such as the reverse interrogation when Goro and his ally gang up on the cop they find in her apartment. The subtitles leave the marvellous Japan-Chandler dialogue untouched, and linguists should watch for the timeless moment when Inoue changes from polite-friendly to super-polite-hostile. (Japanese speakers should add an extra star to the rating just for that). This is not anime, as Disney might say. This is a great story, animated. Required viewing for Japan enthusiasts, and a welcome break from the abnormal. ●

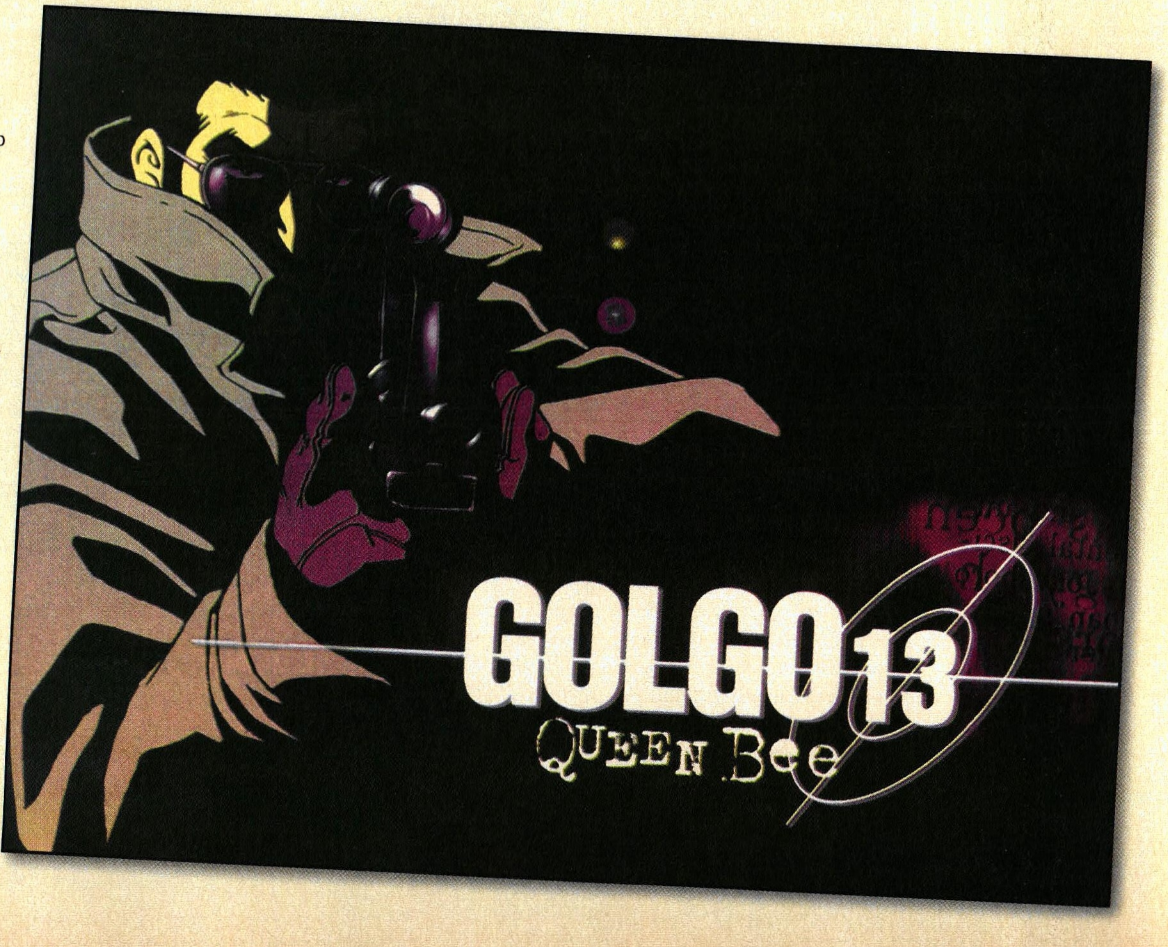
Golgo 13: Queen Bee

Director: Osamu Dezaki
Duration: 60 mins, dub/sub
Certificate: unrated
Price: $29.95/$19.95
Distributor: Urban Vision, NTSC
Reviewer: Fred Patten
Rating: ★★★

Takao Saito's long-running *Golgo 13* manga series, featuring the world's most deadly assassin, seems fated to be poorly served in anime form. There was the 1983 theatrical feature, also directed by Dezaki, and now there is this video, released almost simultaneously in both Japan and the US.

Like the 1983 outing, *Queen Bee* features an unbelieveably sexy queen of crime and a romantic subplot which destroys all credibility. Queen Bee is the lovely, caring mastermind behind the South American drug lords. She personally leads cocaine drops into the US which result in the massacres of entire FBI stakeouts. When Democrat presidential candidate Robert Hardy runs on a "No More Drugs" platform, she publicly promises to assassinate him. So Hardy's running mate hires Golgo 13 to protect him by offing Queen Bee first. Body counts quickly become mountainous, while revelations of corruption at the highest levels swell into a conspiracy theory that even *The X-Files* wouldn't touch (and don't miss the denouement after the closing credits).

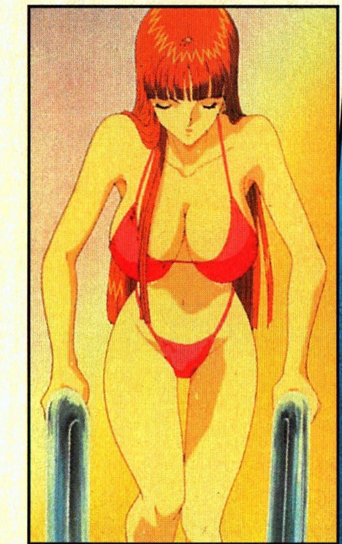
But Saito's suspenseful thrillers derive much of their impact from his excellent sense of action and his stark graphics, emphasising the predatory, hatchet-faced features of his cast. Dezaki is a skilful director, but his hallmark is softness: rounded lines, fleshy features and scenes in muted pastels, often fading out into overly-solarised freeze-frames, which do not seem to freeze action so much as bring it to a dead halt. ●



Strange Love

Director: Daiji Suzuki
Duration: 80 mins, dub/sub
Certificate: unrated
Price: $24.95/29.95
Distributor: USMC, NTSC
Reviewer: Helen McCarthy
Rating: ★

Known as *Hen* on its Japanese release, Strange is a fair description, though it doesn't relate to the Love of the title. The protagonist may have jugs with independent suspension but she also has ears like Prince Charles. Homages to the *A-Ko* school-run, *Bubblegum Crisis* concerts, *Catgirl* biking, U-Jin and monster sex-fiends all show how cynically the producers have read their audience's cultural references. Even the presence of Yasuomi Umezu on design is subverted as he pastiches Mamoru Nagano with sharp-faced, waif-eyed, long-legged nymphets. And if writer Hiroya Oku went round claiming this as an "original story" in Britain he'd be done under the Trades Descriptions Act. People with an interest in sociology or cultural indicators will find *Strange Love* useful and instructive. But the disjointed story makes *Overfiend* look like *War and Peace*. ●



Strange
Love

Rail of the Star

Director: Toshio Hirata
Duration: 80 mins, dub
Certificate: unrated
Price: $19.98 (sub version released last year)
Distributor: AD Vision, NTSC
Reviewer: Fred Patten
Rating: ★★★

Chitose ("Chiko") is a little girl in Japanese-occupied North Korea. The Japanese are the privileged upper class, and Chiko is too young to understand the war of 1941. All she knows is that luxuries disappear, shortages become desperate and the lower-class Koreans become openly surly. By 1945, Chiko realises that the Japanese are hated oppressors. Homeless, she and her parents join other Japanese families on the dangerous trek through Soviet-occupied North Korea to the safe-haven of American-occupied South Korea. Their only guide is the North Star.

Chitose Kobayashi's true story is truly exciting, although the movie's lacklustre direction is not. There is little action. The story progresses through the growing shabbiness of Chiko's family, and even after the defeat, the hostile Koreans and Soviets seem less menacing than just plain rude. Character design and music do not support the suspense; while Chiko's dresses gain patches, she herself remains a rosy-cheeked, plump Kewpie doll. Koichi Sakata's music is consistently pretty; even at the climax, when the Japanese are racing for the American zone through salvoes of gunfire from the Soviet guards, the soundtrack provides a slow, dreamy waltz. And why translate the title overly literally as Rail of the Star, rather than more fluently, as The Starlight Railway?

Despite this dull treatment, the story is so basically dramatic that it is well worth seeing. ●

The Silent Service

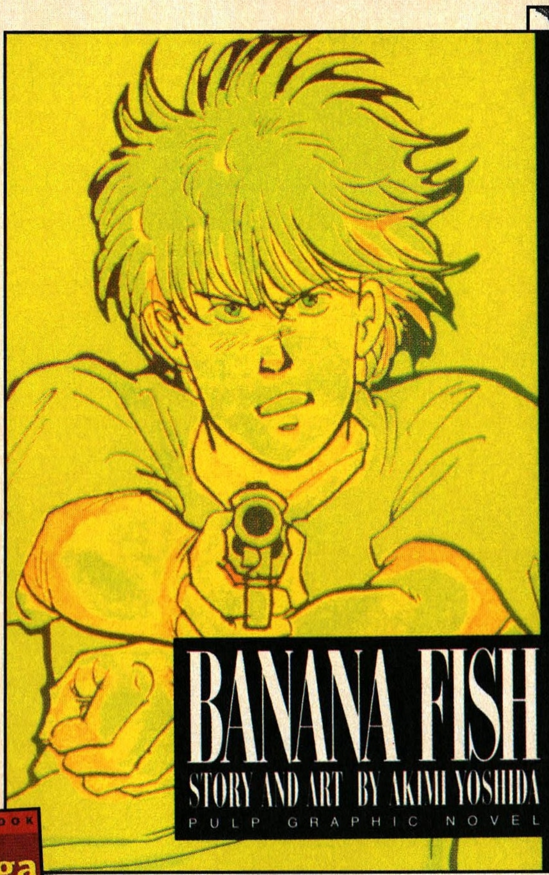
Director: Ryosuke Takahashi
Duration: 100 mins
Certificate: unrated
Price: $29.95/$24.95
Distributor: US Manga Corps, NTSC
Reviewer: Helen McCarthy
Rating: ★★★★

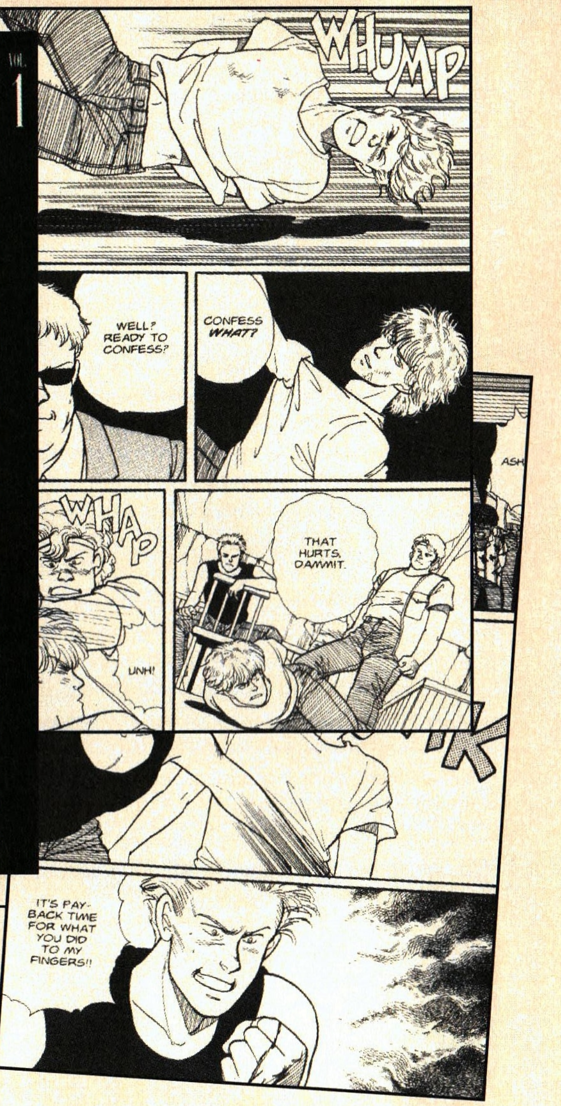
Kaiji Kawaguchi's manga asked questions about the real agenda behind the US/Japan security pact, nuclear power in peace-keeping, and Japan's role among the superpowers of the future. The anime version, produced by a stellar crew including *Votoms'* Ryosuke Takahashi, serves the manga well but leaves the audience gagging for more with an infuriating cliffhanger ending to it's game of bluff and counter-bluff. Set in the real world of today, with real armies, ships and planes that will have mecha geeks slavering, and self-serving, blinkered politicians who are all too credible, the story reminds us that when the chips are down the only allies you can really trust are the ones with too much to lose. There are no heroes in this tale of a new supersub and its impact on US/Japanese relations – even submarine Captain Kaieda, as enigmatic as he is charismatic, is an ambivalent figure, and the simple courage and faith of the average serviceman is shown as admirable, but generally futile. *The Silent Service* is a complex and demanding tale, capable of holding its own in any list of war movies, and recommended to anyone who can cope with the idea that politicians lie and killing machines kill. ●

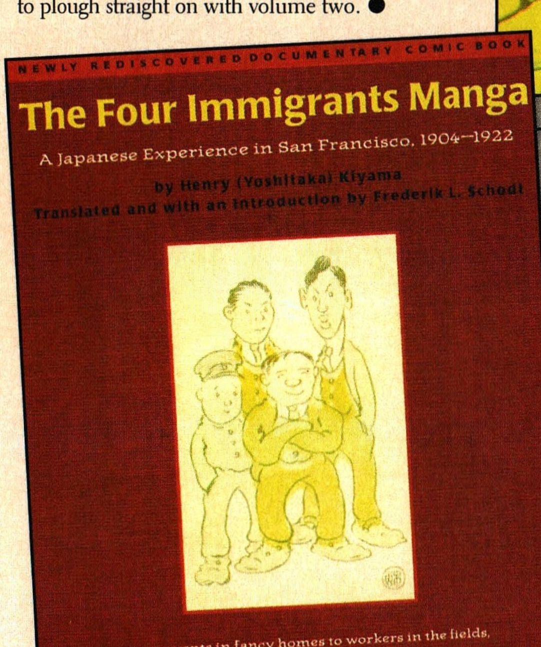
Banana Fish

Viz Communications, $15.95
Writer/Artist: Akimi Yoshida
Reviewer: Helen McCarthy
Rating: ★★★★

Opening during the Vietnam war, Yoshida's manga goes on to raise a number of intriguing themes: boys surviving in very different worlds, how Japan sees America and itself, and the impact of violence on the individual and society. All this is wrapped up in the tale of a pair of professional Japanese tourists, innocents abroad in the big bad Apple, who get involved in a gangland feud that seems to be about the power, control and status but really stems from mob involvement with a lethal narcotic. Nothing in Yoshida's America is entirely as it seems and her people are full of secrets. Her art is clean and punchy, action scenes framed as carefully as movie storyboard panels to catch both movement and emotion. Oniki's translation is clean and unobtrusive; I'm not a native speaker of either Japanese or American, but the words didn't jar in my mind's ear. Subtle and clever, my only disappointment was not being able to plough straight on with volume two. ●


VOL. 1
BANANA FISH
STORY AND ART BY AKIMI YOSHIDA
PULP GRAPHIC NOVEL

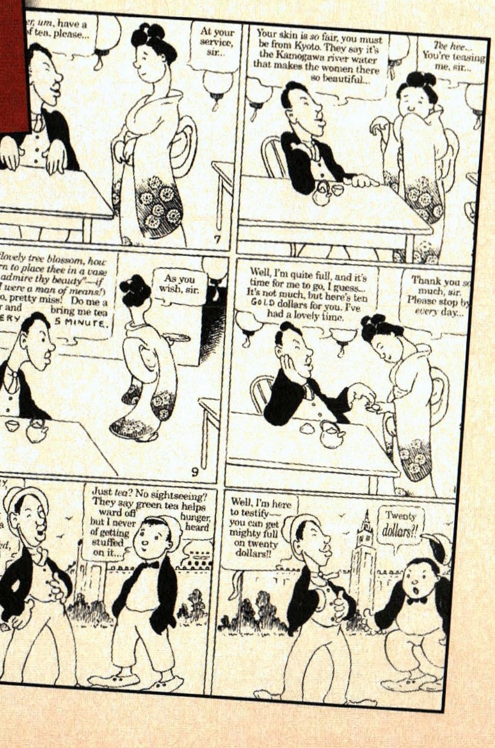

WHUMP
WELL? READY TO CONFESS?
CONFESS WHAT?
ASH
WHAP
THAT HURTS, DAMMIT.
UNH!
IT'S PAY-BACK TIME FOR WHAT YOU DID TO MY FINGERS!!


NEWLY REDISCOVERED DOCUMENTARY COMIC BOOK
The Four Immigrants Manga
A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904–1922
by Henry (Yoshitaka) Kiyama
Translated and with an introduction by Frederik L. Schodt
From servants in fancy homes to workers in the fields, through earthquakes, riots, a World's Fair, war, and Prohibition – the true story of four young Japanese men who pursued their dreams in the rough and tumble of American history

The Four Immigrants Manga

Stone Bridge Press (Berkeley CA), $12.95
Author: Yoshitaka "Henry" Kiyama
Reviewer: Jonathan Clements
Rating: ★★★★★

You know you're onto a winner when even the translator's preface reads like a detective story, and *Four Immigrants* doesn't disappoint. The genuine rags-to-rags tale of four Japanese boys seeking their fortune in 1904 San Francisco, this early manga has languished unread for sixty years, until it was lucky enough to be discovered by the one man in the world who could do it justice. Fred Schodt's painstakingly-assembled translation is a work of brilliant scholarship and immense historical value, made all the more enjoyable by being genuinely funny. For those of us who have lived abroad while struggling to learn a new language, *Four Immigrants* contains many familiar moments. Our young tearaways break crockery, get mugged and teach a parrot to swear in Japanese. They also witness some landmark events in American history, until, like Ray Bradbury's own strangers in a strange land, they wake up one morning to discover that they have become one with the aliens.


er, um, have a of tea, please...
At your service, sir...
Your skin is so fair, you must be from Kyoto. They say it's the Kamogawa river water that makes the women there so beautiful...
Tee hee... You're teasing me, sir...
7
(Ah, "lovely tree blossom, how I yearn to place thee in a vase and admire thy beauty"—if only I were a man of means!) Hallo, pretty miss! Do me a favor and bring me tea EVERY 5 MINUTE.
As you wish, sir.
Well, I'm quite full, and it's time for me to go, I guess... It's not much, but here's ten GOLD dollars for you. I've had a lovely time.
Thank you so much, sir. Please stop by every day...
9
Hi, HENRY, I spent all day drinking at the tea house. I'm stuffed, but I feel great!
Just tea? No sightseeing? They say green tea helps ward off hunger, but I never heard of getting stuffed on it...
Well, I'm here to testify—you can get mighty full on twenty dollars!!
Twenty dollars?!

My favourite character is Charlie, the tall, educated would-be diplomat, forced to work as a skivvy for ignorant 'keto-whitey' housewives, while he snarls Confucian epigrams. It's Charlie who whiles away the lonely days in quarantine by deciphering the Cantonese graffiti (itself the subject of Marlon Hom's excellent *Songs of Gold Mountain*), who gets stood up by a Japanese waitress at the Expo, and who perpetually loses his money on gambling and bad investments. It's Charlie who rails against Japan's old ways, but it's also Charlie who is reduced to lamp-post-chewing exasperation at the Americans' treatment of immigrants. Eventually, a war veteran and a mail-order family man, it's Charlie who waves Kiyama off as the artist returns home. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, he has become an American.

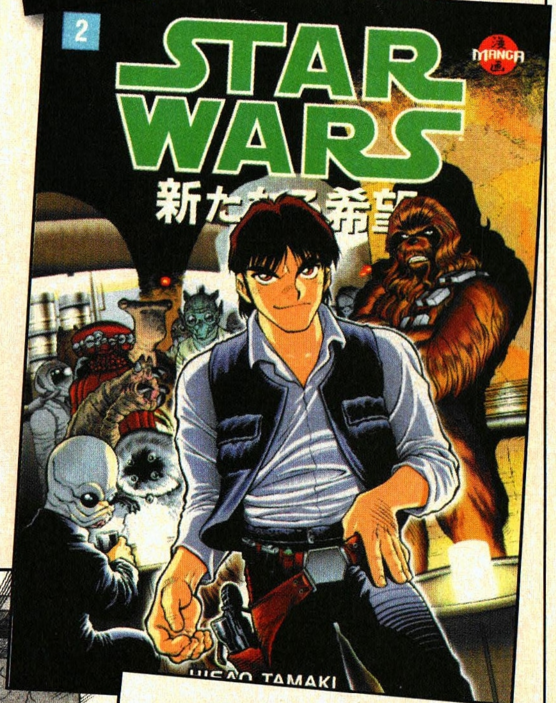
Four Immigrants is totally unputdownable; this review was delivered late because I kept having to tug the manuscript away from curious passers-by. It is also worth pointing out that this entire work began its new lease of life as just a single panel in *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*. Who knows what other gems await? Timeless, and unmissable. ●

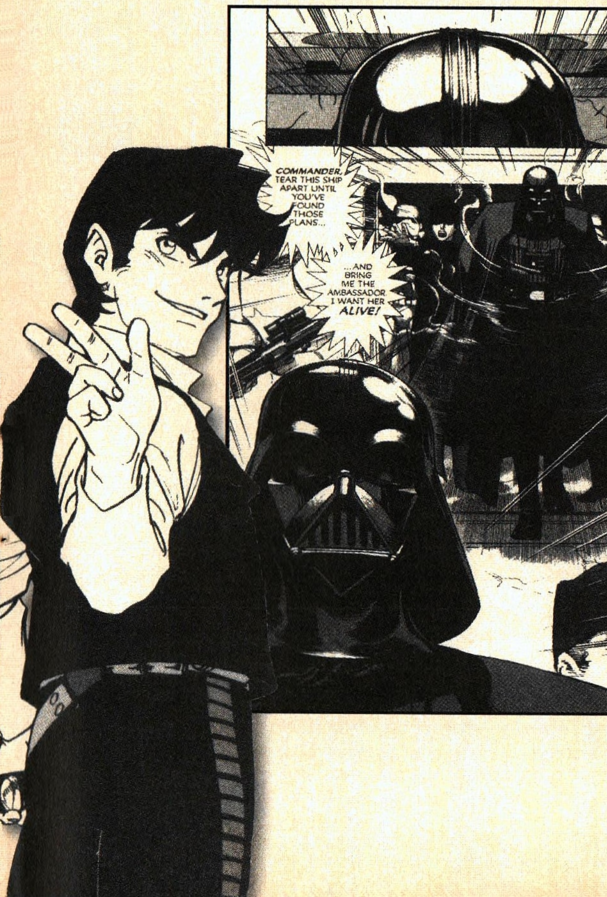
Star Wars: A New Hope

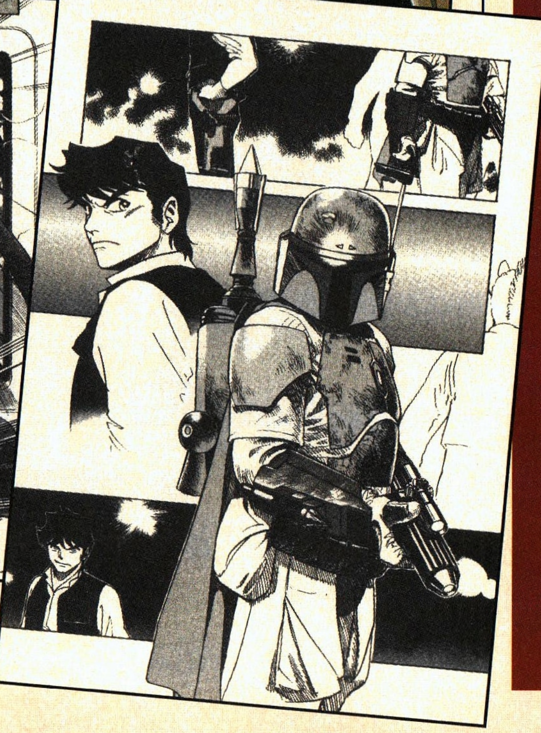
Dark Horse Comics, $9.95 (£6.95) each
Author/Artist: George Lucas/ Hisao Tamaki
Reviewer: Jim Swallow
Rating: ★★★★

Yes, this is the *Star Wars Special Edition* in manga form, and yes, it's pretty much exactly what you expect it to be; but don't let that glib description and the high cover price turn you away. *Star Wars: A New Hope* is like a comic that's fallen through a wormhole from some parallel universe where *American Graffiti* bombed and a Japanese director like Jun Fukuda made *Star Wars* instead. There's a mixed thrill for '70's generation manga readers to see the story of a galaxy far, far away refracted through an oriental prism, with all the conventions of both sources intact. Some of the scenes, like the destruction of Alderaan and the Millennium Falcon's escape from Mos Eisley, detonate off the page like black-and-white dynamite, and the true strength of manga's filmic storytelling imagery shines through; for example, the wordless confrontation between Han Solo and Boba Fett is over-dramatic to just the right notch. Rather than have a redundant translation from the flat Japanese script, Dark Horse use Lucas' movie dialogue, and there's the additional treat of some re-inserted cut scenes here and there that are not in the *Special Edition* (still no Toshi Station clip, though) With excellent full-colour covers by *Dirty Pair* pseudomanga artist Adam Warren and some painstaking retouch by Tom Orzechowski, *Star Wars:*is a cool pop-culture fusion that you just gotta love, even if you do know how it ends. ●

1
MANGA
STAR WARS
新たなる希望
HISAO TAMAKI




COMMANDER, TEAR THIS SHIP APART UNTIL YOU'VE FOUND THOSE PLANS...
...AND BRING ME THE AMBASSADOR. I WANT HER ALIVE!



In BRIEF

by Melissa Hyland

Oh My Goddess! 'The Devil in Miss Urd'

#2 (of 6)
by Kosuke Fujishima, Dark Horse
Rating: ★★★★

The series reverts back from heartfelt drama to the wacky humour it does best, as the villainous Mara creates a demonic clone of Urd to wreak havoc amongst the goddesses. The story and art maintain the previous issues' high standards, making for an enjoyable read.

Drakuun: The Hidden War #3

by Johji Manabe, Dark Horse (Adult)
Rating: ★★★★

Karula and Dard enjoy their last few days of peace as the evil Emperor Kurgh marshals his forces against their rebel base in Akogiland. Johji Manabe skilfully contrasts sexy comedy with the harsh realities of war and its effect on individuals, to great effect.

Masakazu Katsura's Shadow Lady I - Dangerous Love

#3 (of 7)
by Masakazu Katsura, Dark Horse
Rating: ★★★★

In this twisted 'Magical Girl' tale, shy heroine Aimi transforms into the sexy thief Shadow Lady and wreaks havoc in Gray City, only to fall in love with the detective trying to capture her. This beautifully drawn, insane comedy should satisfy most 'Bad Girl' fans.

Blade of the Immortal

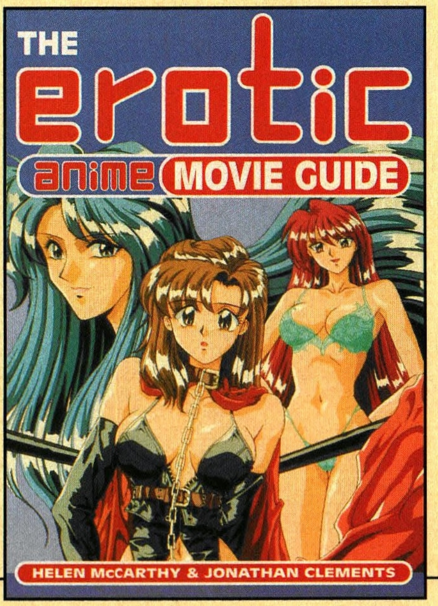
#28
by Hiroaki Samura, Dark Horse
Rating: ★★★

Set in feudal Japan, Rin encounters Anotsu, her mother's murderer, who dies at Manji's hand rather than reveal his dark past to his son. Now he seeks revenge against the immortal warrior in this tragic reflection on the complexities of good and evil.

The Erotic Anime Movie Guide

Titan Books, £12.99
Authors: Helen McCarthy and Jonathan Clements
Reviewer: Jim McLennan
Rating: ★★★★

I approached this tome with some unease. Do we really need a volume devoted to the one facet of anime beloved by the tabloids? Yet their ignorance illustrates that nothing is more misunderstood here than the erotic side of Japanese animation. The book falls into two halves: first, chapters on *Cream Lemon*, shonen ai and other topics, then an A-Z filmography similar to the *Anime Movie Guide*. Particularly impressive was the chapter on press coverage, which deserves inclusion in any media studies course. The distinctive styles of the two authors sometimes feel like literary crazy paving, yet their different approaches complement each other nicely; Clements is relentlessly down-to-earth, McCarthy inhabits a realm of subtext and angst. Both approaches are valid, and the contrast adds depth to the book. Coverage goes well beyond the title, into areas not strictly erotic, anime, or movies e.g. computer games and 'magical girl' shows. The justification for including the latter, most innocent of anime, is alleged teenage drooling over transformation sequences; questionable, especially when Clamp's far more relevant *Miyuki-Chan in Wonderland* is dismissed in half a sentence as "playing with lesbian chic". Similarly, the shonen ai section is bulked out with references to mainstream titles, while the chapter on *Overfiend* was synopsis-heavy. A full index is also sorely needed. Sometimes both writers seem happier discussing ancillary issues: the book's strength lies in its wealth of interesting material on translation, the anime business, fandom, censorship, the role of women in society, and more. This is perhaps inevitable given the topic; eroticism is intensely personal. But the authors deserve applause for shedding intelligent light on the medium's darker corners, especially in its social context. No matter what your background, you'll find something new and fascinating here. Whether sex sells or not, the *Erotic Anime Movie Guide* is a winner. ●



Think Like Amano: Exhibition Retrospective

Ten Productions, c.£70
Author: Gail Gregg
Reviewer: Chrys Mordin
Rating: ★★★★

As a designer for Tatsunoko Productions, Yoshitaka Amano's distinctive "fantastical" designs found their way into such diverse productions as *Battle of the Planets*, *Casshaan*, *Tekkaman* and *Vampire Hunter D*. Most notably, in 1984 he teamed with Mamoru Oshii to make *Angel's Egg* "just for ourselves". If you've been lucky enough to see this, you will have seen a dreamlike film: formless yet flowing, a series of images evocative beyond words. This is a distinctive factor in Amano's work, his use of colour, composition and textures leading your eye into a rich fantasy world populated with mythological creatures and dream beasts. Ideas and figures drawn from Celtic myths and Greco-Roman designs combine with Amano's own creativity and vision to provide a body of work that has been collected into 17 volumes, which have sold over a million copies.

This retrospective collections weighs in at a hefty 300 pages, and covers every period of his work, from covers for Michael Moorcock's *Elric* to character design for *Final Fantasy*. Its high quality and full colour reproduction create a highly desirable coffee table artbook, and its oversized format allow for detailed reproductions of his pieces. The only negative factor is the price: expect to pay anything from £70. Still, for anyone who appreciates a unique art style from a singular visionary, this collection is highly recommended. ●

THE BEST OF
ANIME

The Best of Anime

Various, Rhino Records, R2-75514, $16.98
Reviewer: Cathy Sterling
Rating: ★★★

The alternate covers say it all: this isn't a compilation so much as an argument between two anime fans. One is in his thirties, remembers *Astro Boy* on US television, and thinks wincing scansion and tautological lyrics are kinda cute. The other is a OAV fanboy with ten minutes to scrape up every tune he can remember, from video's predominantly poppy choices. The end result is a 16-track lucky-dip of theme songs including *Urusei Yatsura*, *Lodoss War*, *Gunbuster* and *Cutey Honey*.

If you're a child of the Seventies, you're in for a disappointment: no *Battle of the Planets* or *Marine Boy*. If you're British, no *Ulysses 31* or *Mysterious Cities of Gold*. You will, however, hear the scary bluster-&-bongoes *Gigantor* theme, and listen with renewed terror every time *Sailor Moon*'s choir of bored cheerleaders sing "friend" with three syllables. And although I should know better, am I alone in thinking Chandler from *Friends* went back in time to record the *Speed Racer* theme? Superb value; your neighbours will hate you. ●

Snake Eyes

Ryuichi Sakamoto, Hollywood Records, HR-62155-2, $TBC
Reviewer: Jeremy Clarke
Rating: ★★★

Sakamoto's score for Brian De Palma's thriller has definite echoes of Herrmann's *Psycho* (which achieved jarring effect with nothing but stringed instruments) and, to a lesser extent, Shore's for *Crash* which employed half a dozen electric guitars.

While not as quite as groundbreaking as either, the best bits have stabbing staccato string rhythms underscoring more traditional, orchestral themes that suggest the romanticism and swirling camerawork of De Palma's quirkier films, with quite a different feel from anything Sakamoto has achieved before. While the resultant score is unlike his previous soundtrack high-points *Wings of Honneamise* and *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence*, the composer seems to fill the suspense thriller brief effortlessly. The disc also includes two non-Sakamoto pop songs by Meredith Brooks and Lakiesha Berri, which are pleasant enough. ●

Cowboy Bebop: Original Soundtrack

Yoko Kanno & Seatbelts, Victor, VICL-60201, £25 (import)
Reviewer: Julia Sertori
Rating: ★★★

This is Kanno's Tin Machine period, as she becomes the keyboardist with the group Seatbelts for the soundtrack to one of the year's hit anime. Kanno and her publishers have always sought to meet non-Japanese fans halfway; these recent releases feature heavy foreign involvement, especially from collaborators Steve Conte and Tim Jensen (the not-so-shadowy figure behind the *Japanese Homegrown* albums). The result is some sweet AOR like Conte's "Rain", amidst some loud, competent (but perfunctory) jazz/blues, and a Vangelis-inspired ambient landscape, broken by an African choir in "Space Lion". According to the sleeve notes, the *Mission Impossible* soundalike "Tank!" reached number one in 2056. Just how far ahead of the times do you want to be? ●

VICL-60201 STEREO
COWBOY BEBOP
FELT TIP PEN RUSH SPOKEY DOKEY BAD DOG NO BISCUITS The EGG and I
CAT BLUES RAIN SPACE LION WALTZ for ZIZI CAR24 MEMORY Tank!
PIANO BLACK POT CITY TOO GOOD TOO BAD COSMOS DIGGING MY POTATO

BRAIN POWERD

Brain Powerd

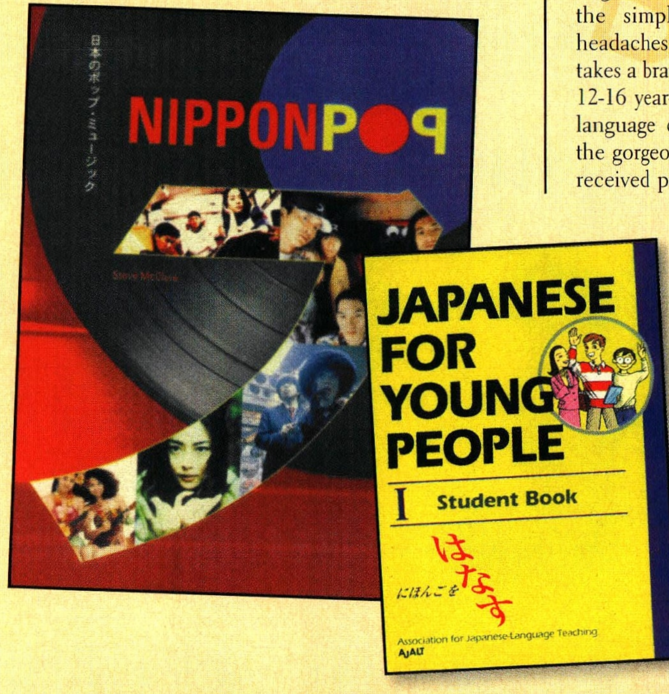
Yoko Kanno, Victor, VICL-60264, £25 (import)
Reviewer: Cathy Sterling
Rating: ★★★★

The *Brain Powerd* soundtrack demands to be noticed; it flits from classical to folk to opera and back again. There are many shades of *Macross Plus* in *Brain Powerd's* stirring strings and soaring voices; the main difference is the absence of anything specifically "alien". Shades of *Macross Plus*' leitmotif "Voices" show through on "Field of Love", and Gabriela Robin returns for the lyrics to the operatic "Sonne", sung by Artur Stefanowicz. Brain Powerd joyously flaunts its many musical references, from a tip of the hat to Beethoven's Seventh in "Transmission" to an Enya pastiche in the charming folk ballad "Butterfly". But this wouldn't be Kanno without something weird: in this case the heavenly choir fused to drum-&-bass in "Ephemera". It's as strange as it sounds, but like all Kanno, somehow it works. ●

Nippon Pop

Tuttle (UK dist. Airlift), £17.95
Author: Steve McClure
Reviewer: Julia Sertori
Rating: ★★★

Seemingly based on a music journalist's scrapbook (McClure is *Billboard*'s Japan bureau chief), this book imitates its subject by hiding its flaws beneath flash and gloss. Strain through the over-designed pages and you might occasionally see some text, and if the quality of the longer pieces were maintained throughout, this book would be incredible. It certainly profiles the right popsters, albeit in an erratic way: Miho Nakayama's on the cover but not inside, Mr Children get several name-checks but their actual entry is a mere twelve words long. Both Pink Lady *and* the Southern All Stars are inexplicably credited with singing 'Seaside Sinbad', Yuming, who gets five pages in Schilling's *Encyclopaedia of Japanese Pop Culture*, gets a mere two paragraphs here. Miyuki Nakajima's concerts are 'imaginative', apparently, although it doesn't actually say why. Ideal for idle thumbing on a record company coffee table, but it could have been so much more. Cheaper, for starters. ●


日本のポップ・ミュージック
NIPPONPOP
Steve McClure
JAPANESE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
I Student Book
にほんごを
はなす
Association for Japanese-Language Teaching
AJALT

Cowboy Bebop: Vitaminless

Yoko Kanno & Seatbelts, Victor, VICL-60248, £16 (import)
Reviewer: Cathy Sterling
Rating: ★★★

Featuring Seatbelts performances like those on the *Cowboy Bebop* OST, *Vitaminless*' centrepiece is the rocking "Real Folk Blues", a brassy 007 opener waiting to happen. It's matched by seven other tracks, including the Peter Gunn pastiche of "Spy" and this occasions dollop of Kanno strangeness, the Lounge/Drum-&-Bass fusion of "Fantasie Sign", featuring breathless French lyrics from Carla Vallet. Although uncredited, Kanno's own voice can be heard on a couple of pieces, yelling in the chorus of "Doggy Dog" and demurely refusing a date in the bonus eighth track "Black Coffee". Is this last a jokey reference to her early days writing commercial jingles, or just the gang fooling around in the studio after hours? Whatever it is, it's more of the same if you like *Cowboy Be-Bop*. ●

COWBOY BEBOP
Vitaminless

Japanese for Young People

Kodansha £16.99/$28
Authors: AJALT
Reviewer: Cathy Sterling
Rating: ★★★

Japanese is one of the most difficult languages in the world. Part of the problem lies in the early stages. It's not just the four writing systems, it's that the simplest of core phrases are honorific headaches. Kodansha's Japanese for Young People takes a brave stab at making Japanese accessible to 12-16 year-olds. An extra $48 will net you the six language cassettes, whose stars are undoubtedly the gorgeously well-spoken young ladies who take received pronunciation to sexy heights. But don't think for a moment that this makes Japanese "easy". It's still the same old Devil's Language, just with younger characters in the textbook. That in itself is something of an advantage, since many language courses assume that only stuffy businessmen will be desperate enough to learn. Ultimately, however, this book cannot solve the crucial problem; learning any language requires interaction and Japanese teachers are thin on the ground. It also has an idiosyncratic and inconsistent way of romanising the "ei" sound, as if Japanese wasn't difficult enough already. ●

Letters

We regret that we cannot reply personally to any correspondence or return any unsoliticed items sent to the magazine.

We love getting your letters, and read them all, even if there isn't enough room to put them all in the magazine. Send your letters to Manga Max, Titan Magazines, 42-44 Dolben Street, London SE1 0UP, UK or titanbooks@compuserve.com. Full addresses will not be printed unless correspondents specifically request it. We reserve the right to edit letters for space, consistency and editorial caprice.

ENCORE UNE FOIS

Generally, the Macross article (MM44) was very good; all the alpha-numerical designations for the mecha were spot-on, as well as the excellent translation of the timeline. However, there were quite a few errors. There has never been a *Macross 7 Kingdom*. It is pretty obvious that Jonathan Clements was referring to the unbroadcast episodes of *Macross 7* (which is a 49 episode series not 26 episodes as previously stated), which are known as *Macross 7 Encore*. He also implies that Kawamori had a lot of control over the Macross saga. This isn't true. For the original *Macross*, most of the creative decisions were down to Noboru Ishiguro. Even for *Macross Plus* somebody else took the rein (Shinichiro Watanabe) and Tetsuro Amino had the last word on *Macross 7*. I would also like to point out that Minmay is not Chinese. She may have a Chinese name and the appearance of a Chinese girl, but despite this she is still Japanese. It states clearly in *Macross Perfect Memory* that Minmay was born in Japan (to Chinese parents, admittedly). I personally cannot read Japanese, but I have many friends who do and they have already translated these passages.

Oliver Barder, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire

It's nice to know that the UN Spacy has repealed all those pesky immigration laws that currently make life so exciting for foreigners in Japan. Next time you're chilling with your Japanese friends, ask them what nationality you would be if you were born in Japan to Korean parents. And don't write, it's just for fun.

COVER GIRLS

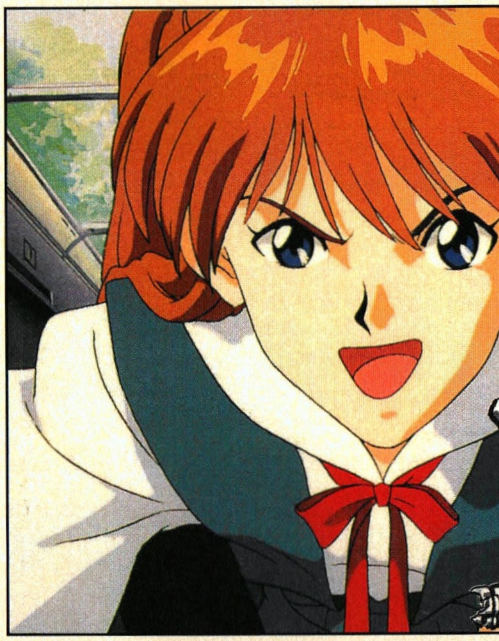
I am a big fan of manga and I'm sure that there are a million other female fans out there. So it disgusts me to see pictures of semi-naked women sprawled out across the cover. It is embarrassing enough for me to go to the back of the newsagents and take my copy from the second shelf down from the porno mags without the cashier looking at me as if I am a lesbian. Take the cover from MM44 for example, how do you think us girls feel when we have to give that to the cashier? MM45 is even worse; the only people who want to see a girl sprawled out with her boobs out are the male readers. So not only does this give the impression that these magazines are sexist and just for boys, it also gives the impression that it is a porno mag as well. There are many other great pieces of manga and anime art that are ten times better than the exposed girls that you lot print on the front page. If you carry on like this, you will lose more and more buyers.

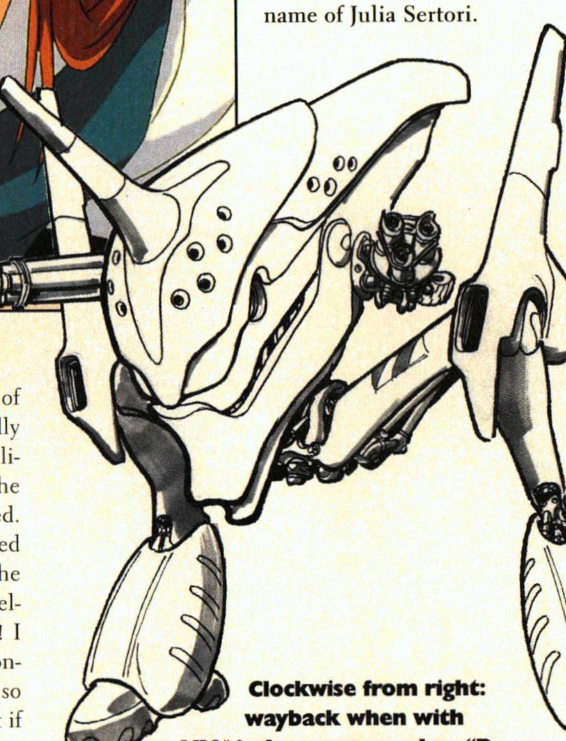
"Jade", Heston, West London

MANGA MANIA
Frederick L. Schodt
We talk to the west's leading manga authority
Macross
15 years and still flying high
MANGA MANIA
Go Go Godzilla!
The big guy has gone all the way to the USA, and has he ever changed!
An American PRINCESS
Miyazaki's last movie Mononoke Hime gets the full Disney treatment
Who ordered PEPPERONI?
Saturday morning mayhem with the Samurai Pizza Cats!
Networking
How to find your anime resource on the Internet

Do You Remember MACROSS?
As the classic series celebrates its 15th anniversary, we gave JONATHAN CLEMENTS a pot of coffee, a stack of books and a tight deadline to explain the Macross universe. This is what he came up with.
MACROSS TIMELINE
MANGA MANIA 61

Many factors influence cover art, including content and the availability of good pictures. We actually wanted a hideously-scarred male doctor and a 40-foot mutant lizard for MM45 and MM46, but were thwarted by circumstances beyond our control. In the fickle world of magazine publishing, the average reader is more likely to buy a magazine with a 'live' cover than an illustrated one, and more likely to pick up a magazine with a girl on the cover than a boy. We're not above putting anime babes on the cover, but nor would we balk at a photo of Chow Yun-Fat.





GOOD EVANS

I am writing in response to P.J. Evans' review of *Evangelion* (MM44) His criticisms are totally unjust; I cannot see any real change in the quality of animation at all. As for his comments on the new Eva pilot, these were totally misguided. Asuka provides a little comic relief: if she behaved like the antisocial Rei or the wimpish Shinji, the series would become annoying. Kaji is also a welcome change, his flirting remains unmatched! I also disagree with Evans' evaluation of the content: "Asuka Strikes" has to be the best episode so far. I can understand difference in opinion, but if he liked the earlier episodes then he must have liked these.

Tony Hanley, Sittingbourne, Kent

Reviewer's opinions are not necessarily those of the magazine. But at no point does P.J. say he *ever* liked *Evangelion*. I think you are confusing him with Lee Brimmicombe-Wood, who has praised the show in several earlier issues.

TOWARD THE TERRACIDE

I discovered this image design from a PC game called *Terracide* and found outstanding similarities between this "ED" model's head and the *Evangelion* robots; note the horn/antenna and the sloping "Jimmy Hill" chin, and also the large air intakes on the shoulders. Make up your own mind...

David Allan, Motherwell, Scotland

You're the first reader to spot one of many tips of the hat in releases from Simis, some of whose staff are big anime fans. As well as the Eva-inspired robot designs in *Terracide*, look out for Absolute Terror fields in *Xenocracy*, and a spunky female journalist in *Team Apache* who goes by the name of Julia Sertori.

Clockwise from right: wayback when with MM#6; do *you* remember "Do You Remember Macross?"; spot the deliberate mistakes in these unused cover designs; the quiet, restrained Asuka Langley; an ED from Simis' *Terracide*.

LOOK *back in* MANGA

Five years ago this month, *Manga Mania* had a special mecha issue, with a monster *Gundam* feature. News included the arrest of magazine publisher Haruki Kadokawa for cocaine smuggling, and the very real possibility that *Newtype* would be closed down as a result. Tsui Hark was reportedly replacing Tim Burton as the director of the *Mai the Psychic Girl* movie, which would be "out some time around the end of the year", according to unreliable sources. Announcements in MM#6 included Katsuhiro Otomo's latest Japanese release, *Roujin Z*, and first volumes of the *Hakkenden, Dirty Pair Flash* and *Black Jack* anime. Cefn Ridout's editorial tore a strip off David Lister's silly anti-anime article "Cartoon Cult with an increasing appetite for sex and violence" in the *Independent*. This month's quote from the letters page: "...before another well-oiled journalist puts pen to paper they should at least get their facts right."

IN FIVE FAB GUNDAM KITS!
コミックス マニア
MANGA
mania
HTY
CHA
SPECIAL!!
Gundam, Macross II, Astro Boy, and other armoured avengers
128 MASSIVE PAGES
COMICS
AKIRA
APPLESEED
GODZILLA
THE SUMO FAMILY
RISING SONS
JAPAN'S GIANT ROBOTS POWER UP!

In Brief

Lawrence Evans writes in to ask if anyone wants to get involved in an *Evangelion* club. Interested fans can contact him at 167 Eden Park Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 3JW. Tel: 0181 658 6257. E: snail001@sprynet.co.uk. We have been inundated with queries about the new *Arslan* releases. For all you people who wrote in, we have a feature on the new *Arslan* in the next issue, just for you. John Noel writes in to say that for some reason we printed the wrong web address for him in the last issue. The correct address should be: www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~crummy/index.html

LAST WORD

Fred Patten asks

Who *Knows* 'Best'?

Practically every genre of popular culture has its own awards. In the media centred around SF, fantasy and cartoon-art, awards are voted on by both professional societies and by fans at their conventions. The common factor is that these are all 'Best' awards, presented for excellence: Best Novel, Best Short Story and so forth.

There were no awards at the first dedicated anime convention in 1991, because one of its co-sponsors was the Gainax animation studio and it was felt this might create a conflict-of-interest situation. 1992 saw the first Anime Expo, and its first Industry Awards for the Society for the Promotion of Japanese Animation (SPJA). These fan-voted awards were in 16 categories such as Best Film, Best OAV, Best Sub/Dub Company and Best Manga. In 1993 Anime Expo repeated the experience with some extra categories, and the new Anime America convention gave out similar awards. These awards reached their peak in late 1995, with the addition of Anime East's Tezuka Awards and the V-Max magazine staff awards for 'Excellence in Anime and Manga'.

But, with the exception of Anime Expo's Industry Awards, the custom abruptly disappeared in 1996. They were replaced by 'favourite' awards, exemplified by Animerica's new annual Fan Awards in such categories as Favourite Leading Man, Favourite Martial Arts Technique, Favourite Villain and Character You'd Most Like to See in a Swimsuit Issue. Since 1996, the trend has been towards generally-humorous, non-judgemental categories. The emphasis of conventions has shifted to attendees, for costumes and model-building, rather than on recognition of the best of professional anime and manga.

What happened? Firstly, the conventions and the magazines making most of the 'Best' awards disappeared. They collapsed partly due to overly grandiose ambitions, and it was felt that presenting themselves as arbiters of taste was an example of this hubris. Most anime conventions since 1996 say that fans dislike 'Best' awards for being "too serious". One fan told me: "If you ask me what my favourite anime video is, or who my favourite character is, I'll be glad to tell you. But the 'Best'? I'd have to see every video there is to answer that fairly. Voting for 'the Best' is pretending to have a degree of expertise that most fans don't honestly have."

A similar opinion was that: "Most fans don't seriously consider all the anime; just what they have seen most recently. Look at the last time the Tezuka Awards were given, where *Ranma* won in almost every category because the new *Ranma* videos had just come out!" Some feel that awards should be more accurately termed 'for anime released in the USA' to explain why US fans might only now have become enthusiastic over a title that originally appeared several years ago in Japan. Another reason is that fans should stick to giving fan awards. Giving a pro-level award implies that a fan group is claiming pro-status. Still other reasons: a feeling that a prestigious award isn't really meant to honour the anime so much as to promote the convention that awards it, and fans don't want to play that game. Moreover, Anime Expo is already giving its SPJA Industry Awards, so any other similar 'Best' awards might be seen as trying to compete with Anime Expo.

Photo SPJA Awards courtesy of Mike Tatsugawa

The bottom line may be that anime fans don't care. Anime Expo's attendees receive an Industry Awards ballot in their registration packs, and the winners are announced at the closing ceremonies. Of six fans asked after the 1998 con what they thought of the awards, none had bothered to fill out their ballot or pay attention to the announcement of the winners. "I was at the con to have fun, and figuring out how to vote in all those (21) categories would have taken too long," said one. Mike Tatsugawa, President of the SPJA, says it is natural for the fans to be more interested in the fan awards, but the professionals appreciate the industry awards. When Pioneer won in the Best American Anime Company category, their representative asked if they could get a duplicate of the trophy: one to display in Pioneer's US office, and one in Japan.

When the SF or comics 'Best' awards are announced, it is a headline event in those fandoms. The winners are listed in all the major magazines. Where are Anime Expo's awards announced besides Anime Expo's own website? How many fans care about the news? For all practical purposes, anime fandom is the only fandom without a serious interest in a 'Best' Award. ●

An anime fan for 20 years, Fred Patten is now director of marketing and publications at Streamline Pictures.

NEXT *Issue*

Coming in MANGA MAX Issue 2

YOUR ESSENTIAL MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF MANGA AND ANIME!
MANGA MAX
TITAN
STAGE FRIGHT!
Perfect Blue and beyond...
INVASION AMERICA
Kuni Tomita interview
PLUS EASTERN HEROES
MASTER KEATON
The Manga of Naoki Urasawa
Number 2
January 1999
DONNIE YEN
The new Big Boss

So what do you fancy in the next issue of Manga Max? The low-down on **Perfect Blue**? Features on bad-girls **Utena** and **Iria**? An exclusive interview with **Kuni Tomita** or the Eastern Heroes boys on **Donnie Yen**? We ask the question: **How Arse is Arslan**? Frederik L. Schodt on the **Lolita Virus**? A London Film Festival report, including the British premiere of **Spriggan**? Fan pages, reviews and all the news from Japan?

How about **ALL** of the above?

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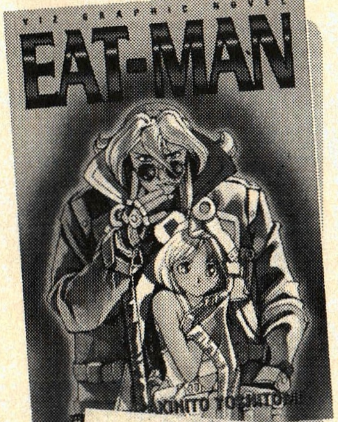

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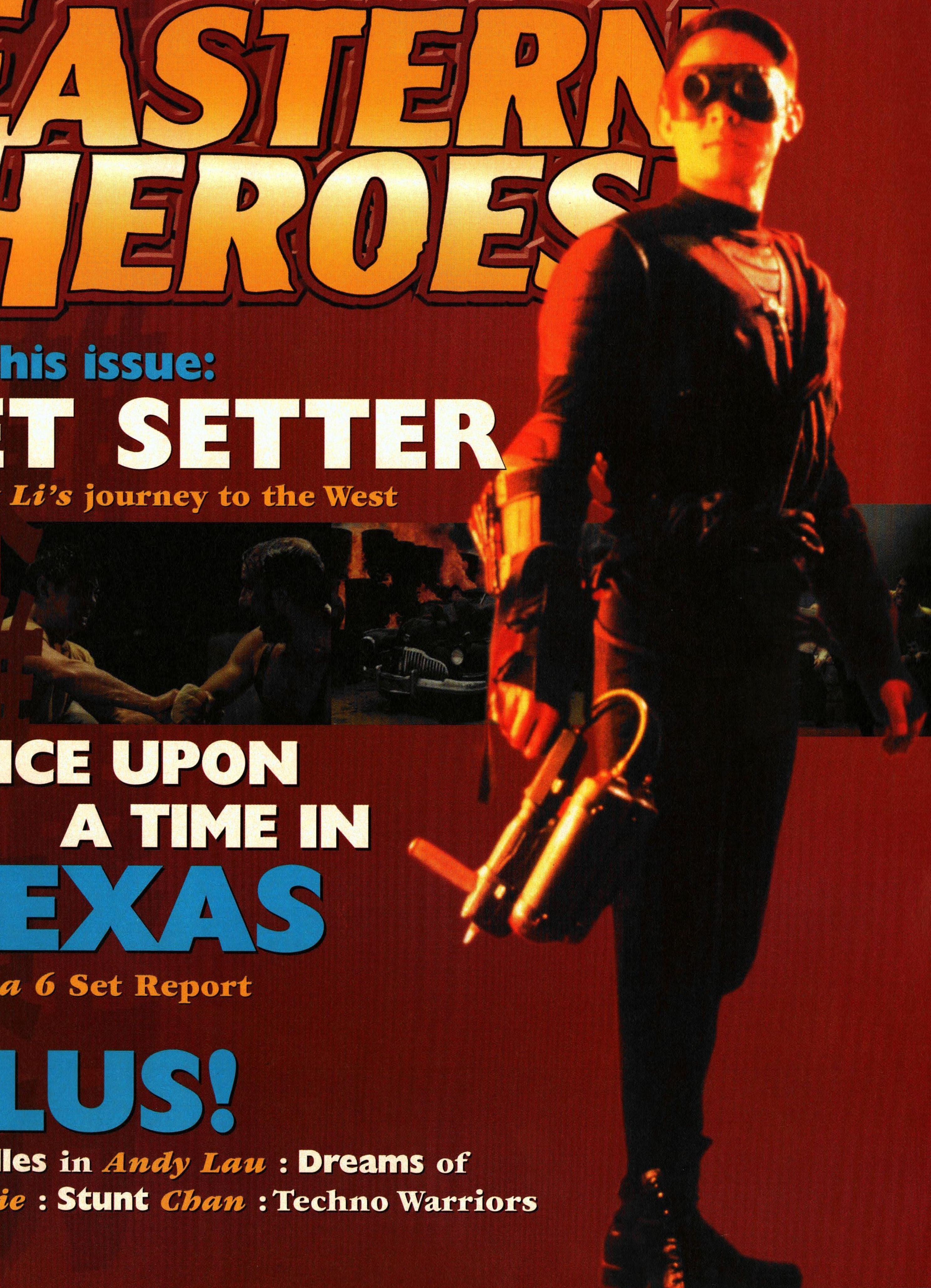
EASTERN HEROES



In this issue:

JET SETTER

Jet Li's journey to the West

ONCE UPON A TIME IN TEXAS

China 6 Set Report

PLUS!

Needles in *Andy Lau* : **Dreams** of *Brucie* : **Stunt** *Chan* : Techno Warriors

Editor
Rick Baker

Contributors
Ting Wai Ho, Bey Logan (HK), Toby Russell, Brian White (UK), MC Thomason (Aus.), Steve Tartalia (US), Julien Fonfrede (Canada)

Special Thanks To:
John Woo, Media Asia, Chinastar, Filmswell, Anthony Wong, Golden Harvest

東方英雄

EASTERN*Heroes*

Welcome to the Eastern Heroes section contained within the newly revamped *Manga Mania*, now *Manga Max*.

Eastern Heroes began life back in 1988, as a small photocopied fanzine mainly about Jackie Chan. Even 10 years ago, Jackie Chan's fan base was growing rapidly, largely due to the late night Kung Fu circuit. As interest grew in other Hong Kong stars over the following years, *Eastern Heroes* grew into a prozine. Toby Russell and I have followed the Hong Kong scene since the early Seventies, and gained a strong reputation both in the UK and Europe for championing Hong Kong films.

We have published several books including *The Essential Guide to Hong Kong Movies*, *The Best of Eastern Heroes* and *The Essential Guide to Deadly China Dolls*. We have also staged many events in the UK, flying in stars to meet their fans, and show film retrospectives of their work, These include John Woo, Chow Yun-Fat, Maggie Cheung, Gordon Lui and Jet Li. Until the summer of 97, we had two shops specialising in Hong Kong cinema memorabilia. Sadly these are now closed, but we do plan to re-open another shop next year (fingers crossed).

Anyway, enough about us. It's great to see that we have found a new home for bringing you news and information from Hong Kong on a regular basis. With the expansion of our video label we have not published an issue of *Eastern Heroes* for over a year, so I am really delighted that we can still keep in touch with all those people that have supported us, and for those of you that have just discovered us.

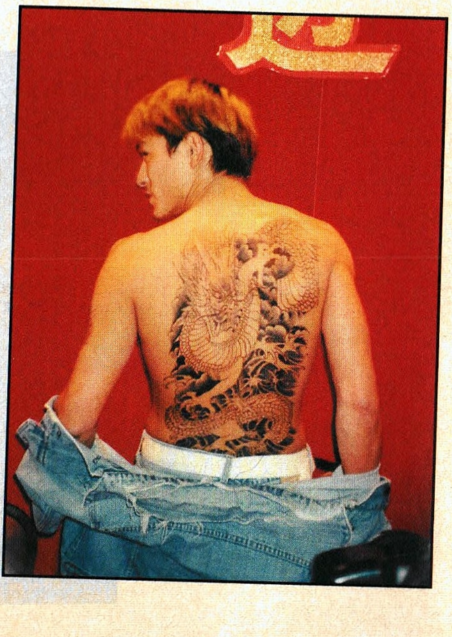
I have decided to start this issue with Jet Li, without doubt the new face on the western block. We have sung Jet's praises for a long time, and at last he is getting the recognition he deserves. It will be interesting to see which way his career goes after his excellent performance in *Lethal Weapon 4*.

So I hope you enjoy this over-the-edge section of *Manga Max*, your comments and questions are welcome. Keep the faith

Rick Baker

RICK'S *Round-up* 98

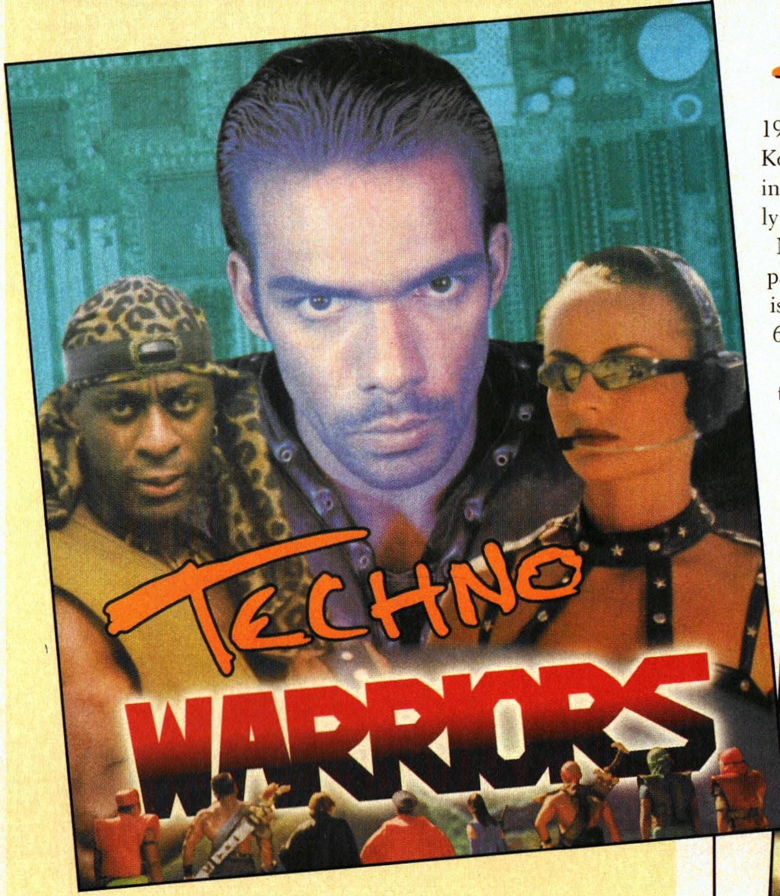
Andy *gets his* wings



Hong Kong superstar Andy Lau underwent hours of work on his back to create the huge fake tattoo for his last movie *A True Mob Story*. Andy, who is better known for his Heroic Bloodshed movies as opposed to his martial arts skills, is still looking for the right vehicle to take him into the United States. "The trouble with American agents," he says, "is that they are too impatient and want you to have overnight fame." Lau is rumoured to be involved in a new project from Chinastar/Wins films. Written by Ken Miller, *Bad Mr Luk* will be lensed in Hong Kong and Canada with Anthony *(Beast Cops/Bunman)* Wong playing the lead role: a killer on the run after a disastrous New York hit, trapped in a disaffected African-American ghetto culture. Expect *The Killer* crashed into *Menace II Society*. ◆

Andy gets his wings for his latest film role

TECHNO *WARRIORS*



British-based martial arts star Darren Shahlavi, who fought against Gary Daniels in Ng See Yuen's *Bloodmoon* and also against Jacky Wu in the excellent *Tai Chi Master* 2, has recently completed his first starring role in *Techno Warriors*.

The film is about a computer games expert who finds himself in a real life battle when two of the villains come to life. The film also stars another UK hopeful, Winston Ellis, last seen in a rooftop battle with Jet Lee in *Black Mask*.

Production company Filmswell have already made a sequel and hope to air both movies at this year's Milan Film Festival. ◆

Winston Ellis goes against Darren Shahlavi in *Techno Warriors*

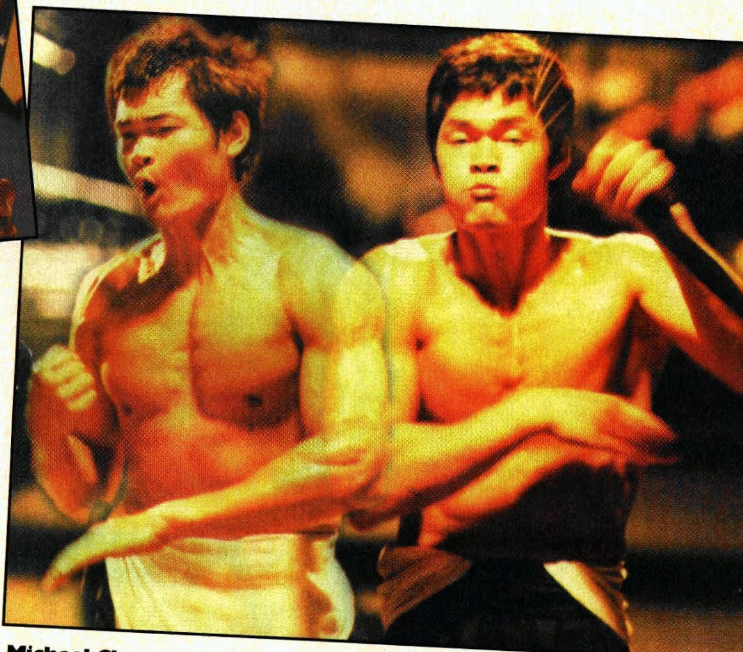
BRUCE *Lives!*

1998 marks the 25th anniversary of Bruce Lee's death, and yet only one Hong Kong movie has chosen to mark the occasion. Michael Chow, star of many films including *Mr Mumble* (which he also directed) and *Asian Connection* has recently completed a comedy with a great Bruce dream sequence.

Michael, who has admired Bruce since he was a teenager, was eager to play the part if he could do his hero justice. After make-up was finished, he was astonished at how well they had captured the look of the "Little Dragon", Michael is 6'1" and a good deal heavier than Bruce.

The movie, with the working title *Flight of the Dragon*, was finished earlier this year. Michael told us that although he felt the scene was well done, he did not want other Bruce fans to feel that he had disrespected their hero.

There is a great nunchaku sequence that will give the censors trouble in the UK. But the film has been temporarily shelved: producer Eric Kee, worried at recent low cinema attendance, suspended the release until early next year to ensure it gets the box-office it deserves. Stay tuned for a Michael Chow interview in a future issue. ◆


Michael Chow lets rip on the set of his new movie, *Flight of the Dragon* and manages to capture that Bruce Lee look

Usual SUSPECT

Ringo Lam is heading back to the US despite his disappointment with *Maximum Risk*. He told me that before he left he would make several more Hong Kong films to out-do his previous works.

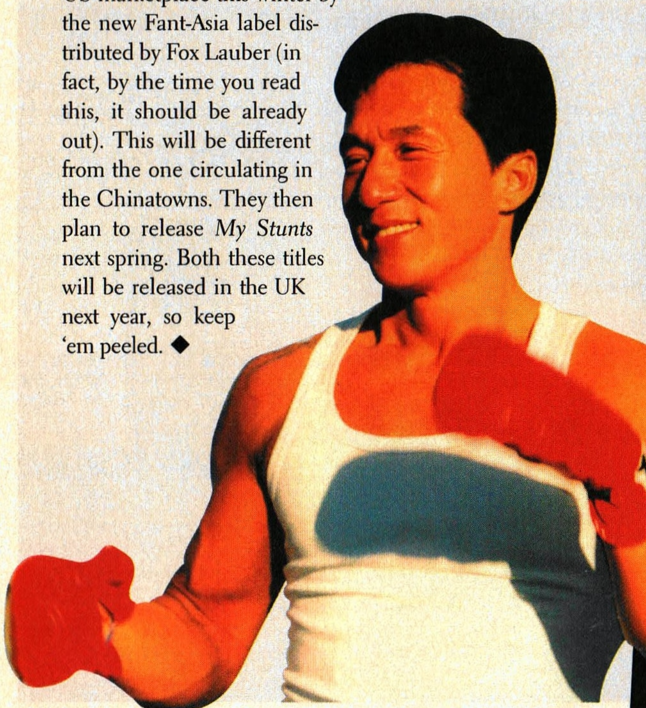
He completed one of these in 1997, the excellent *Full Alert*. But he plans to go one better with *Most Wanted*, re-titled for the MIP-Asia show as *The Suspect*, starring Simon *(Bullet in the Head)* Yam. *The Suspect* (financed by Sil-Metrople who were behind the three Jet Lee *Shaolin Temple* movies) had a relatively large budget and an ad campaign that was very similar to Bryan Singer's *Usual Suspects*.

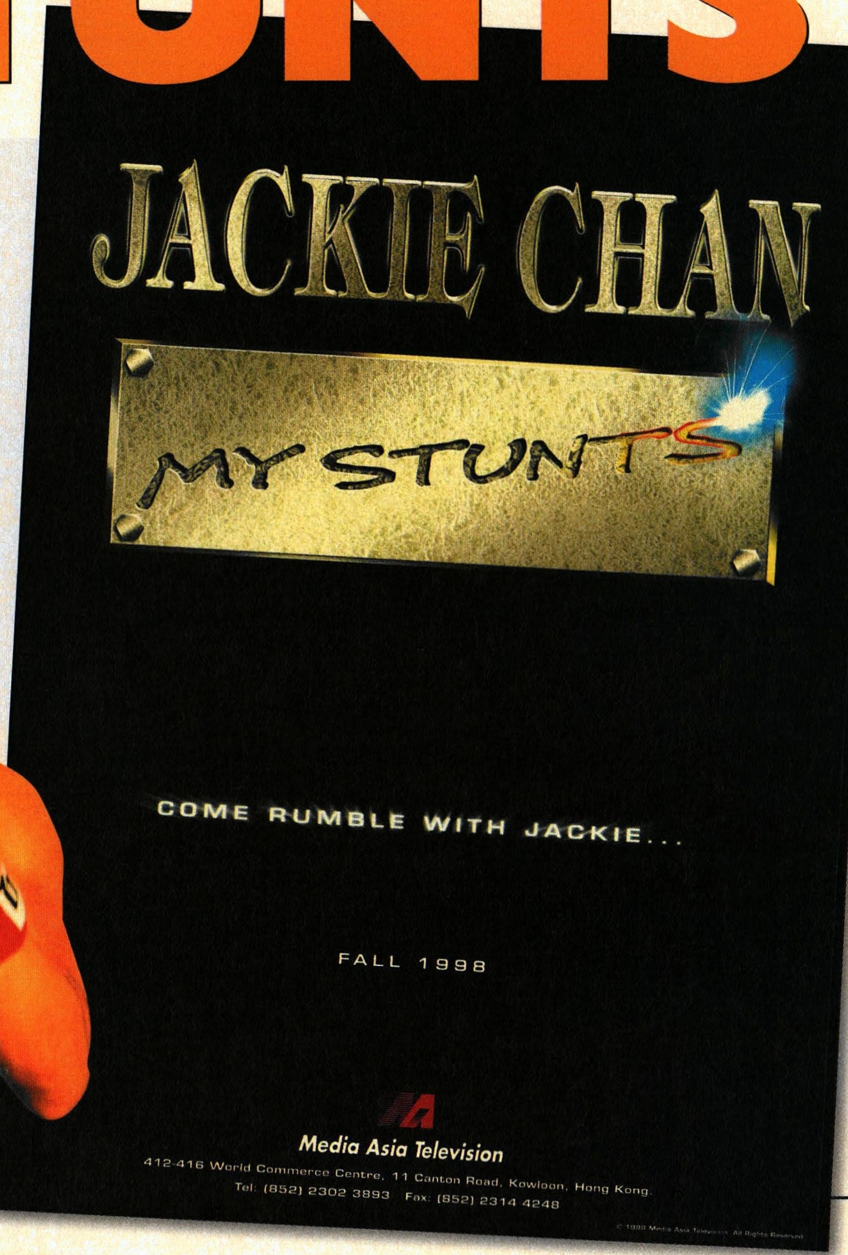
Despite all this, the film seems to have received a lukewarm reception. But until we see it ourselves, we won't know if this is a reflection of its quality, or the current HK box office slump. ◆

My STUNTS

After completing his first autobiographical video documentary Jackie Chan rumbles on with the second instalment *My Stunts*. Bey Logan at Media Asia tells us they are working non-stop to have the documentary ready for the Milan film festival in November. They promise that this documentary will be even more exciting than the first, with Jackie performing exclusive stunts for the camera.

My Story will get a release in the US marketplace this winter by the new Fant-Asia label distributed by Fox Lauber (in fact, by the time you read this, it should be already out). This will be different from the one circulating in the Chinatowns. They then plan to release *My Stunts* next spring. Both these titles will be released in the UK next year, so keep 'em peeled. ◆





JACKIE CHAN

MY STUNTS

COME RUMBLE WITH JACKIE...

FALL 1998

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IN BRIEF...

The NFT in London will hold a *Bruce Lee weekend* from 4 December. All the classics will be screened uncut. His widow Linda will do a Q&A for the screening of *Enter The Dragon*. We will also have a stand so if you're in London pop down. Book early.

New films from Media Asia include *The Terrorist*, a thriller centered around the opening of Hong Kong's new airport. Teddy Chen of *Downtown Torpedoes* fame will direct Tony *(The Lover)* Leung in the film. Other titles in production are *Police Story* the television series starring non other than Jackie Chan.

Jackie has never done television work and is set to star in the first episode and make guest appearances throughout the planned series. If that goes well then he will appear in *Strikeout*, a film about a basket-ball player. This will be developed by Media Asia and a Hollywood production team with a major director at the helm. But before all that Jackie will most likely make *Armour of God* 3 (or *Project Condor 2* , depending which way you look at it) for the Chinese New Year as a favour for the flagging Golden Harvest studios.

John Woo passed through the UK for a few days to meet with Tom Cruise. His fleeting visit was to re-work the script for next year's forthcoming sequel to *Mission Impossible*. John will direct Tom in what could be his last action flick. He told me that he wanted to make some light comedy dramas and take his film making into different areas.

He will shy away from the more high-calibre action flicks which has made his name world wide. When I begged him to reconsider, he smiled and laughed. Does that mean he was joking? He *has* promised to make at least one more movie with his brother in blood, Chow Yun-Fat. Also loved his Christmas card: a shot of the famous Hollywood sign completely shot out with bullets leaving the words WOO.... cool. ◆

Anyone out there that has had a role in a Hong Kong movie? Please write with pics for a feature on Westerners in the Hong Kong film industry.

東方英雄 EASTERN HEROES

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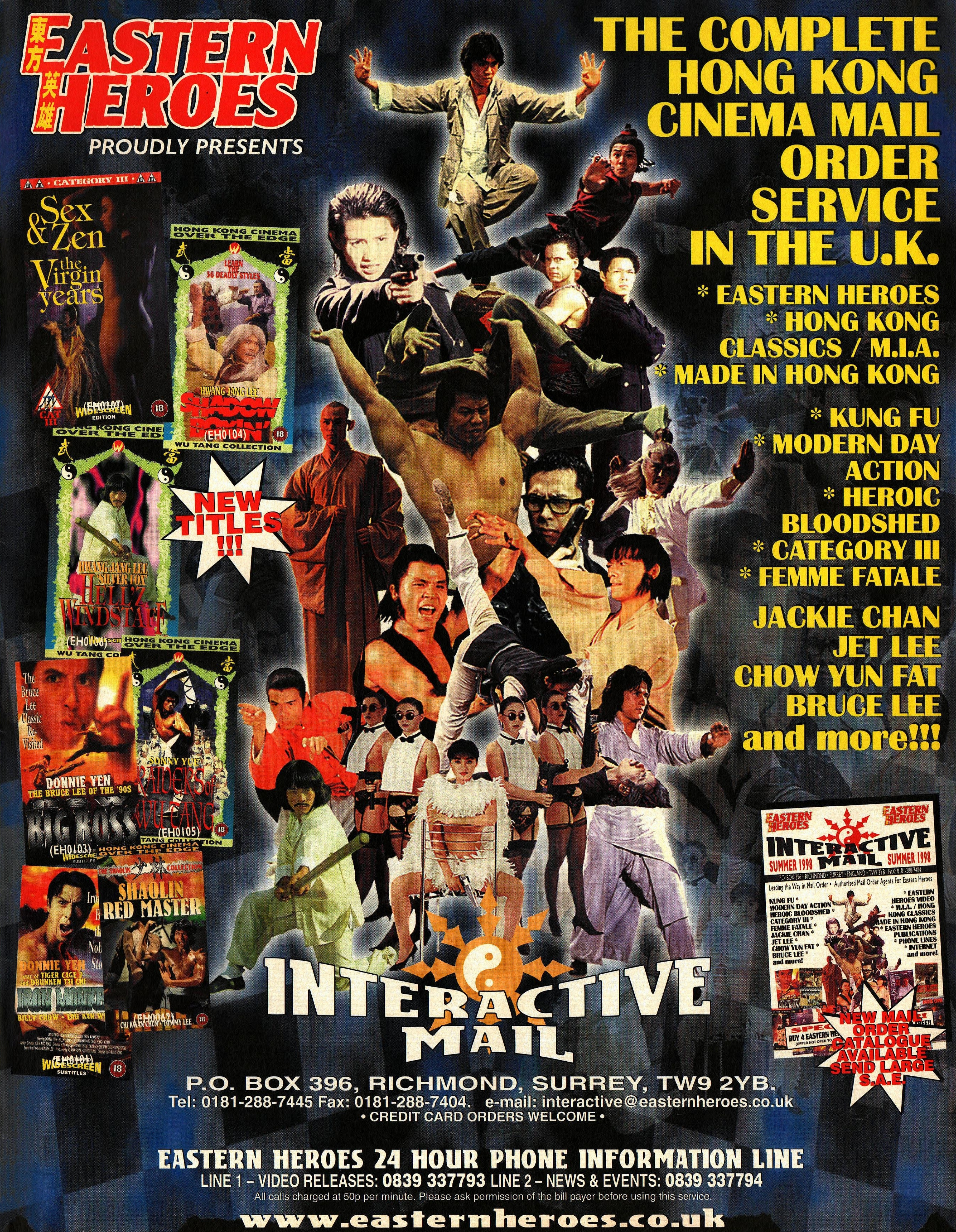
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Jet Li's rise to fame

LEE-THAL WEAPON

Cheeky heart-throb or martial master, Jet Li's got it all in spades. *Rick Baker* caught up with him in England.

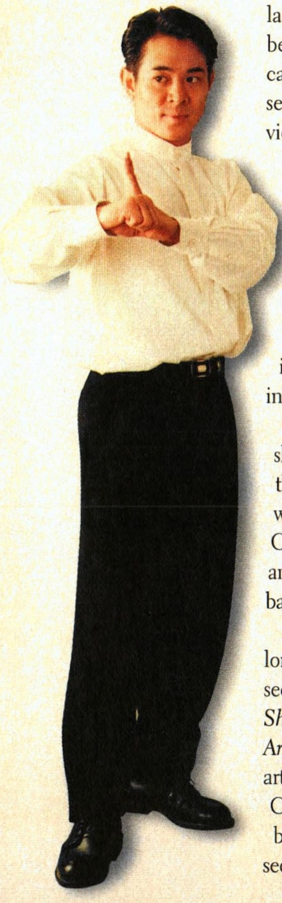
Top: The Masters Top middle: Jet in the UK pulling a Lethal Weapon style pose. Top right & bottom left & right: Jet poses Hollywood east style. Bottom middle: Jet in Born to Defence.

Jet seemed puzzled, but knodded his head politely. I'm not sure his interpreter had really delivered my sentence corectly... but, hey!

I was trying to explain why in the UK we spelt his surname "Lee" (as in Bruce) as opposed to the rest of the world that opted for "Li". The name was supposedly invented by overzealous Filipino ad-men: Jet as in "Jet Fighter", but Lee as in Bruce Lee. It seemed they were trying to pitch him as some distant relative and the name just stuck and was easier than saying Li Lianjie. However, the Hong Kong film companies started to use Li in their press books, and we all know that they are the best spellers in the world – just check out their English subtitles. Li might sound like Lee in Chinese, but to the West it looks like Lie.

His trip to the UK was a huge success, with tickets selling out within a week. Jet was still very modest about his chances of breaking into Hollywood at that time. His answer was, "If I do I will be happy, if I don't I will still be happy," delivered with that cheeky grin. But it was clear in my mind that he was the next choice after Jackie.

Jet's real rise to fame in the West has really only come in the last couple of years. Amongst the hard core fans his popularity has been growing steadily since the mid-Eighties; his true exposure came when Quentin Tarantino announced that he had acquired several of Jet's movies to release through his Rolling Thunder video label.



JET SETTER

When he was seven, his primary school teacher took him to the Beijing Wu-Shu Academy. It was here that Jet's passion for martial arts began. He discovered to his delight that he had a natural gift for it. This enabled him to rise through the ranks quickly and at just eleven years of age he took five gold medals in the national Wu-Shu championships. He continued his training and by the Seventies he was the national coach.

In 1981 he was approached to star in the film *Shaolin Temple*, shot on location in Hunan and using the real Shaolin Temple for the best parts of the picture. This was the first time audiences worldwide were given a chance to see behind China's Red Curtain. The film broke box office records in Hong Kong, Korea and Chinatowns all over the world, but sadly the picture was banned in Taiwan.

From this one film Jet became an overnight success. It wasn't long before Jet was back in front of the cameras with the comedy sequel *Kids from Shaolin*. Although this was not as action-packed as *Shaolin Temple*, the film still fared well at the box office. *Martial Arts of Shaolin* was the final part of the trilogy, and unfortunately artistic difficulties had flared up between Jet and director Liu Chialiang. But problems aside, the film achieved very impressive box office figures with its superb sets and exciting action sequences aplenty.

NEW DIRECTIONS

Jet turned his hand to directing, also starring in *Born to Defence*. Set during World War Two, Jet played a young soldier who took on all comers inside the boxing ring. The finished film was very unpolished and was not regarded as one of his best vehicles. The box office figures were disappointing and, even worse, Jet had sustained a bad back injury while performing his own stunts.

Disappointed, Jet spent the next two years trying to get US citizenship, claiming that he was not able to express himself as freely as he would like, and that he had no power when it came to putting forward creative ideas. His move West was to prove invaluable. After a slow start in Lo Wei's *Dragon Fight*, which co-starred the then unknown Chow Sing-Chi, and Tsui Hark's *The Master*, (shelved and later released as *Wong Fei Hong '92*), he was offered the lead role in Tsui Hark's *Once Upon A Time in China*. The movie was a huge success worldwide, and Jet went on to star in two sequels.

Along with the success of *Once Upon A Time in China* the Hong Kong movie scene witnessed a revival in traditional kung fu films, with Jet at the top of the hot property list. Everyone wanted a piece of Jet, and it was Golden Princess who were lucky enough to

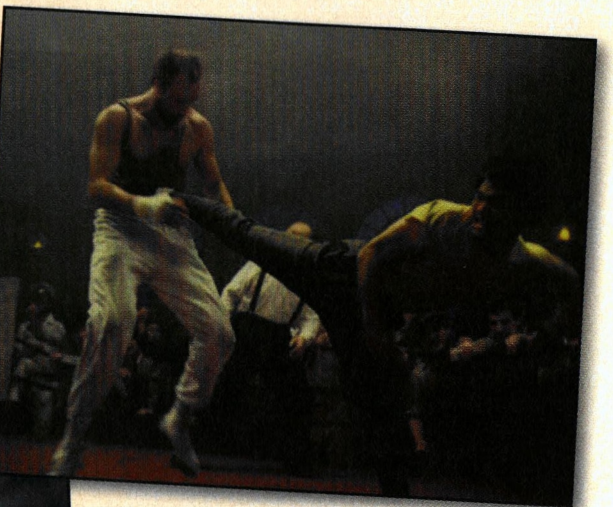
sign him to star in Ching Siu-Tung's *Swordsman 2: Invincible Dawn*. When the film opened in Taiwan it took the highest Lunar New Year box office ever. The picture was released in 86 screens island-wide.

A frantic panic broke out amongst producers who were desperate to get Jet Lee in their film, and some people were prepared to go to any lengths to get him. Later that year Jet's personal manager Jim Choy was gunned down in Kowloon. The reason was not clear, but talk in film circles said he had refused to let Jet star in some unscrupulous Triad production.

COMEDY AND KUNG FU

1993 was to be Jet's biggest year. He set up his own production company Jing Tung, and produced the fabulous *Legend of Fong Sai Yuk*. Jet had once again created a tremendous hit, and he himself declared, "This is as close to me as any character I've ever played." Later that year he went on to make the comedy sequel, *Fong Sai Yuk 2*.

In between these two films Jet made a surprise move when he went into co-production with the Heung Brothers (one of whom played the indispensable Mr Dragon in *God of Gamblers*) of Win's Movie Company. The film was called *Last Hero in China* and was directed by comedy king Wong Jing (*City Hunter*). It was a brilliant mixture of comedy and kung fu and witnessed the welcome return of Gordon Liu in full abbot regalia. The fight scenes were directed by the veteran of the Jade screen, Yuen Woo-Ping (*Drunken Master*). Jet called Yuen back to direct *Tai Chi Master*, where he played Chang San-Fong, the real life founder of Tai Chi. He then went on to shoot one more film in 1993, which was released in as *Kung Fu Cult Master*. This film returned to the Shaw Brothers for inspiration and saw Jet cast alongside martial arts supremo Samo Hung. In recent years Jet has found even more fame with several modern day action movies, including a brilliant performance in *Fist of Legend*, a good version of the Bruce Lee classic *Fist of Fury*.



JOURNEY TO THE WEST

Foreign interest was growing in Hong Kong films. New Line Cinema acquired *Rumble in the Bronx* and Jackie Chan's next three pictures unseen. Their studio rivals Miramax turned to Quentin Tarantino in a bid to find the next Chinese star to break in Hollywood. Tarantino had recently seen *Fist of Legend* and suggested that they should build Jet up as a major star. Despite all the hype, Tarantino was to lose interest in the project, citing the difficulty of dealing with the Chinese companies. Miramax, as far as I know, still have the rights to several of Jet's films including *Fist of Legend*, and now Jet has found his success it may inspire them to get the titles out into the market.

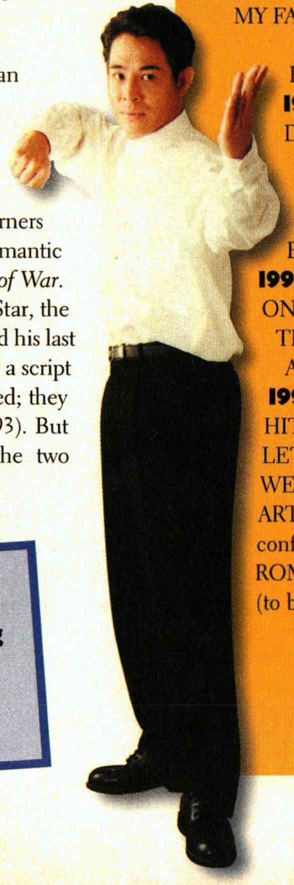
But with or without the might of Tarantino's Midas touch, Jet's Hollywood calling was already on the horizon. His good friend Tsui Hark suggested that he take a role in his new Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicle *Knock Off*. But Jet pulled out at the last minute and decided to look at other options. Having seen both *Knock Off* and *Lethal Weapon 4*, I believe that Jet made the right move. His performance in *Lethal Weapon* has secured his foreseeable film career and brought him several juicy projects.

One of these is *Art of War* for Alliance/Universal, to be produced by Dan Halsted and Oliver Stone. Jet plays a secret agent wrongly accused of assassinating world leaders, and is against the clock to find the real killer. This project is currently halted as Jet is locked into another film deal with Warners entitled *Romeo Must Die*. Despite its more romantic title, Jet is reported to favour it more than *Art of War*. He still has one film left to shoot with China Star, the Hong Kong film company that has been behind his last four movies. They have been trying to work on a script that would see him and Michele Yeoh reunited; they last appeared together in *Tai Chi Master* (1993). But this is becoming increasingly unlikely as the two achieve greater status in the West. ●

Watch out for two documentaries coming from Eastern Heroes in the coming year – *Jet Lee: Shaolin Art of War* and *Lee-thal Weapon*.

JETOGRAPHY

1982
SHAOLIN TEMPLE
1984
SHAOLIN TEMPLE 2: KIDS FROM SHAOLIN
1986
SHAOLIN TEMLE 3: MARTIAL ARTS OF SHAOLIN
1987
BORN TO DEFEND (star & director)
1988
DRAGON FIGHT
1991
ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA
1992
THE MASTER (aka WONG FEI HUNG '92)
ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA 2
SWORDSMAN 2: INVINCIBLE DAWN
1993
ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA 3
FONG SAI YUK
LAST HERO IN CHINA
FONG SAI YUK 2
TAI CHI MASTER
1994
KUNG FU CULT MASTER
BODYGUARD FROM BEIJING
1995
FIST OF LEGEND
MY FATHER IS A HERO
HIGH RISK
1996
DR WAI IN 'THE SCRIPTURES WITH NO WORDS'
BLACK MASK
1997
ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA AND AMERICA
1998
HITMAN
LETHAL WEAPON 4
ART OF WAR (to be confirmed)
ROMEO MUST DIE (to be confirmed)



Once Upon a Time in Texas

Roberto Lopez was raised on a steady diet of Hong Kong films while growing up in New York. A qualified action director himself, this is his account of working on Once Upon a Time in China and America with his hero, Sammo Hung.

Back in October 1996 a friend asked if I wanted to key grip a film shooting in Texas: *Once Upon a Time in China 6*, directed by Hung Kam-Po. I was busy on other projects until Steve Tartalia (who appeared in Part 1 of the China series) informed me that Hung Kam-Po was in fact Sammo Hung. "Of course, how stupid!" I started jumping up and down, "He's my favourite director!"

Meeting Sammo on the set was a genuine honour and a thrill. I had no other agenda other than to learn as much as I could. Back home, I had made test shots of action at different speeds and was hoping to validate my research of where, when and how much to undercrank the camera *[to make fight scenes look faster– Ed.]*. I was also very interested in "fly by wire" techniques, harnessing and how Hong Kong stuntmen pad up for hard, high impact falls. My understandingof the process, based on Western methods, requires costly digital erasing of the wire. I knew Hong Kong film-makers didn't do that, but instead relied on proper angles and lighting.

The stunt team got used to me being around. A lot of American martial arts hopefuls heard about the film and worked their way on as extras. One in particular would pine for attention by dropping into a split, or some other little schtick. The team would laugh a little, then ignore him. Second unit director Lau Kar-Wing was the nicest guy you'd ever want to meet. He offered sage advice and always answered my questions. I made myself useful to the stunt men and started picking up on their tricks. Sometimes I'd get ribbed for "stealing knowledge".

Above: Sammo Hung's at his most godly with camera in hand Right: Sammo Hung and Hung Yan Yan rehearse

One day Lau was showing us the chain-whip. Jet saw what we were doing, grabbed the chain and busted out with some wicked moves. My friend Johnny made a cappuccino and gave it to Lau. He told him "If you teach Roberto, I will make a cappuccino for you every day." He

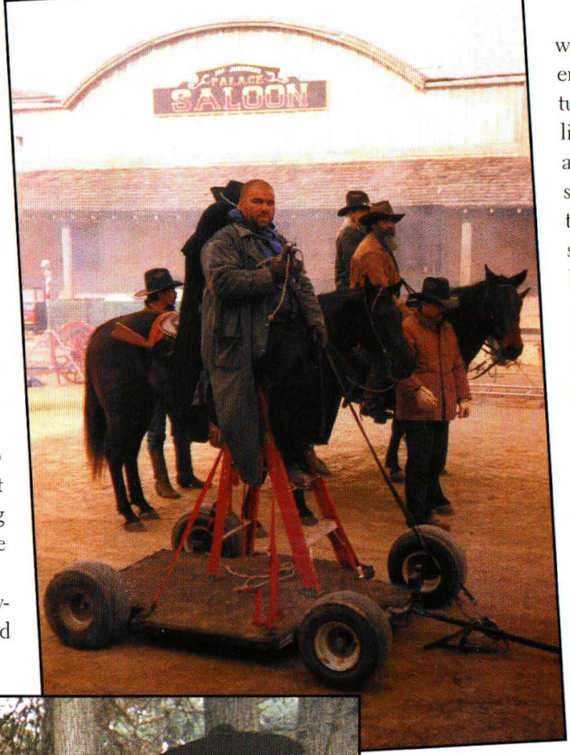
agreed and gave me lessons when he could. Not a bad exchange, eh?

How did I get a role? I had an action film trailer with me – something I wrote, acted in and directed. In it I get the hell beaten out of me, and get whacked head-on by a van going at about 20 mph. Well, the stunt team got hold of it and were laughing at me for days. It got through the pipeline to Sammo and he asked me afterwards if I wanted a part in the film. Three weeks go by and not a word. I thought perhaps he had forgotten, when out of the blue the costume director starts taking my measurements. I thought this must be a little extra part of some kind. Another week passed, then the costume director asked me to try on my costume. Presto! I'm a bandito baddie. Sammo looks me over, shoves his cigar in my mouth and tells me to shave my head!

One month into the production and problems begin to arise. It was a difficult shoot to begin with, but with a myopic cameraman insisting on focusing with the naked eye, it was a nightmare. He made us all look bad in the eyes of the HK crew. They had a second cinematographer, Raymond Lam, reshooting a lot of what the first camera was shooting.

Two months in and we were still waiting to find out what we were going to do. There was no script. No-one knew anything about their roles. Sammo had a page or two written up the night before. Every day was a mystery. I started working on both sides of the camera and never knew when I might have to jump into costume. There were times while in costume that I'd have to jump in as a grip and set up dolly tracks, rig pulleys for wirework etc, then jump back in front of the camera. Madness!

Three months into production and more crewmembers were hired. Third and fourth units started working around the clock, often under adverse weather conditions: snow, sleet, rain and very cold temperatures of 10 degrees. There was a trailer on the set earlier for Jet Li but some of the stunt team were hanging about for relief. Sammo thought they were getting too soft so he got rid of it. Jet was used very strategically by this time as it was impossible for him to be in three, sometimes four, places at once. Often his stunt double, Dee Dee, would cover for Jet or one other stuntmen would double him. Jet would run back and forth for his close-ups. It was a gruelling schedule, sometimes running around the clock with no break for weeks.



Sammo worked relentlessly to finish the film; he would race from one unit to another, often on horseback (he's an excellent rider). When one crew would finish they would hand the set over to the second crew. In fact, Tsui Hark flew in after finishing *Double Team* with van Damme and helmed the third unit. The film was scheduled to be released on 1 February for the Chinese New Year, so they had to complete shooting by 15 January to leave time for editing and promotion.

Towards the end, we all worked at a fever pitch. There was a flu bug going around the set and everyone was getting it. My fight scene with Yan Yan (Club Foot) went well under the direction of second unit director Lau Kar-Wing: no-one is better at sticking a landing after a hard-coiled cable yank than he. Soon after, I fell deathly ill from the virus and took my turn at the local hospital. The film wrapped on the 14 January 1997 (with hardly a day to spare) and I flew into Hong Kong for the premiere on the 1st of February, as scheduled. ●

Top right: Hung Yan Yan faces Berto in his trademark en-guard. Below: Berto's the only one strong enough to hold Sammo steady during this difficult hand-held shot. Centre: Horses do not provide stability for close-ups, so I built this. Bottom: The Gang of Seven, including Roberto Lopez, far right

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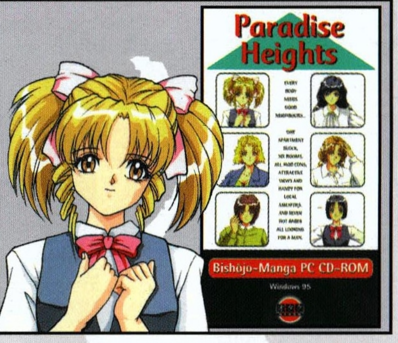

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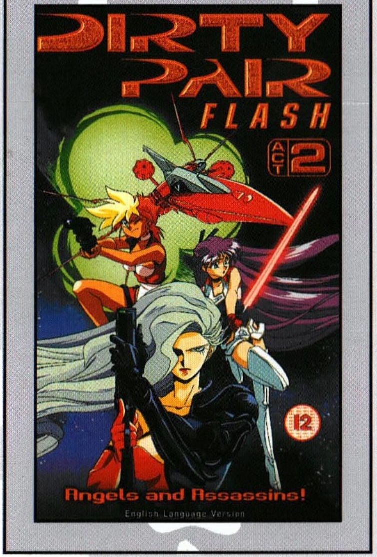

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